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Styll am I besy bokes assemblynge
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BOONE STOP

6

BOOKS BY
HOMER CROY

BOONE STOP
HOW MOTION PICTURES ARE MADE

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
[ESTABLISHED 1817]



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[See p. 152]

When Cleo spoke to anybody I would lift my hand up, take off my hat and bring it down to a level with my eyes and then put it back on again, and then let my hand fall gracefully back into position.

Boone Stop

BY
HOMER CROY
AUTHOR OF
"HOW MOTION PICTURES ARE MADE"



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
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BOONE STOP

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	<i>I hear some good stories about preachers and parrots, and that night the men come running to the house over the corn-cobs. Ma plays on the organ and the lightning hits a cottonwood</i>	I
II.	<i>I go to school and get a beating, and Pa prays till I think my knees will crack. Fino, the Human Fish, swears under his breath and saves another life . .</i>	8
III.	<i>I have functional stomach trouble and want to talk about Jesse James, but Susie prefers history. Pa eats with his head down and throws a railroad man over the fence</i>	26
IV.	<i>I commit the unforgivable sin</i>	43
V.	<i>People begin to come for miles around to see Pa, and are converted just before meal-time. I decide to go to heaven with Gran'ma and let Mid look out for himself</i>	59
VI.	<i>I drink another bottle of grape-juice and go out for the world to come to an end. But it doesn't, and I go back and feed the pigs</i>	69
VII.	<i>Our church has a strawberry festival, but I don't care. I go to the pool-hall. I walk home with a girl and Mr. Chambers snaps his fingers and says, "By gicks!"</i>	83
VIII.	<i>Pa takes me in the parlor and shuts the door, but he doesn't do anything. Ozy Getchell has supper at our house and Pa has a good time talking . .</i>	99
IX.	<i>I find that playing pool and smoking ten-cent cigars is more fun than sitting around home and listening to Pa read the Bible. I get invited to the Copus Club and decide to be a gentleman</i>	III

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
X.	<i>I decide to be a graceful and accomplished dancer for three dollars. I put my arm around a girl and don't think anything about it</i>	124
XI.	<i>I go to the Copus Club ball in one of Mr. Pliss's dress-suits and charm the ladies</i>	138
XII.	<i>I get to be a man of the world, with cigars in my pocket, and give Edna some candy. I set them up to Merle and learn how to act in No. 9</i>	165
XIII.	<i>"Oh, my daughter! my daughter!" says Pa, like a verse from the Bible, and a tear runs down Ma's wrist</i>	195
XIV.	<i>We have fair week and Pa sees the Famous Queens of History and has to swallow pretty often. Madame Ristine comes out with fewer clothes on than ever and pretends that a gutta-percha snake bit her. Veve slides down the wire and I find Oscar weeping behind the Herefords</i>	210
XV.	<i>The Never Fail caves in and the doctors come with their oxygen-machines and I get out of work for a while. Pa and Shug Leffler come together and Pa's breast heaves</i>	248
XVI.	<i>I bring Pa some egg-nog and his knees seem lumpy. But a few days after that he goes back to work again. That night a man with a satchel comes . .</i>	262
XVII.	<i>We go out on a hayrack-ride. I try to kiss a girl and that night a doctor comes to our house</i>	284
XVIII.	<i>A strange woman in the kitchen wears Ma's apron and there is a queer smell over everything. Pa's bed is carried out to the barn and the depot 'bus backs up in front of our house</i>	301
XIX.	<i>Gran'ma motions for Charley Colden to come around to the back door, and he goes away whistling. I buy a dress-suit and it looks pretty good on me. I go to Cleo's dance and something happens on the station platform</i>	309

BOONE STOP

BOONE STOP

I

I hear some good stories about preachers and parrots, and that night the men come running to the house over the corn-cobs. Ma plays on the organ and the lightning hits a cottonwood.

ALL the long, hot, sweltering afternoon we worked. That is, I did. But Mid didn't do much. He never did. While I had to drive the team on the hay-fork and hold up the doubletrees to keep them from bumping the horses on the hocks, all Mid did was to ride the pony and carry water to the pitchers in the field. Riding a pony with a couple of jugs slung over the saddle isn't hard work, but carrying a doubletree all day is. The only fun about it is when one of the wagons loses a tire, or mires down crossing the slough, and the men in the haymow come down and sit around in the calf-lot and tell stories. Some of them were kind of hard to understand, but the men always laughed, so I laughed, too.

Nova Gooch could tell more funny stories than

BOONE STOP

any of them—especially when somebody gave him a chew of tobacco. He would fasten his teeth in the plug, work it up and down a few times, and hand back what was left. Hitching up a little closer, he would say, "Did you ever hear this story?" And when he got through everybody would slap their hats on the ground and laugh. But when Pa would come around Nova Gooch would stop and begin talking about the weather, or if a man could eat thirty quails in thirty days; and when Pa would go on he would tell another of his own stories. When a load of hay came up Nova Gooch would lift up the jug with one hand, with the strap wrapped around his thumb, shake out a little of the water to wash the seeds away, and drink it down with his throat sounding like a loose board. Nova liked to show how strong he was, and would shove me over with one hand, unbutton my clothes, and put hayseed down me just to give me an idea how much I would have to grow to be a man. He was good at wrestling, and, give him a pair of window-weights, and nobody in the county could outjump him. Up the ladder to the haymow he would go, and just as the first forkful came along the track he would have to stop and get the hayseed out of his shoes. But he was good on dumping. When he would call out to dump you could hear him clear to the house, and then I would turn the horses around and come back, carrying the doubletrees. When he yelled I had to stop the horses mighty quick, because if I went too far and the hay didn't dump right he would yell out a lot of funny things about me to make the other men laugh.

BOONE STOP

The supper bell rang and the men from the field came in, some on wagons and some walking. At the gate they left their forks, sticking them into the ground, because many a good horse has been ruined by carelessness, while Pa came along, swinging over the stubble with his rheumatism foot, bringing a fork some one had forgotten or a jug that had been lost off one of the wagons. Straight and tall he was, with hair to his shoulders, and in his hand he carried his Testament.

Nova Gooch was telling a story when Pa came around the corner of the barn, but when he saw Pa he began to talk of the best way to cure heaves.

At the house the men washed up and sat down on the edge of the porch, waiting for Ma to say the word, and when she did and they got up there were wet places on the boards.

I had to help milk, but Mid didn't. He got to stay at the house and hear the men talk.

"It's time for prayers," said Ma, in the hushed tones she always used when she spoke about praying.

Gran'ma brought in the Bible, while Ma arranged the chairs in a circle about Pa, with a stool for Susie. When we were seated Pa came in, as if we were his congregation, and turned to the silk bookmark with the tasseled end and opened slowly. No difference how long the day nor how late the hour, Pa wouldn't hurry the Lord. In his deep voice he began to read. It was about some people who slew one another, but it wasn't as interesting as the Dalton boys. Nobody could get ahead of the Dalton boys. If they liked you they wouldn't hurt you, and if they knew you were their friend

BOONE STOP

they would give you money and things; but if you pretended you were their friend and then told on them that was the end of you. They would ride up some night, call you to the door, and say, "I've come for you!" and you always knew who it was.

Ma would sit with her eyes on Pa as if it was the best reading in the world. She always knew what he was reading about, but I didn't. When it got interesting and would tell how somebody took somebody else by the hair of the head and slew him, I would be interested and wonder if he used a knife, or what, but most of the time I was thinking about something else. I was thinking about the stories Nova Gooch told, when Pa said, "We will pray." Getting down on our knees, we put our faces on our chairs. Pa began to pray, his voice rising and falling and thanking the Lord for things that I didn't know we had, until his voice began to get farther and farther away. Then there was a stir and they were getting up. I rose, too, but I hadn't got much sleep.

A long time afterward it seemed that I was in a well and somebody was trying to pull me out, but I couldn't make it. I would get part way up and then I would slip back. And then just as I got to the top a pair of doubletrees would drag me back again . . . and then Ma was standing by the side of my bed with a lamp in her hand.

"Come quick, Cleve! Come down-stairs at once!"

I was awake in a second. Ordinarily I wake up kind of slow and have a hard time remembering where I am, but now I felt as if I had been up for hours. I knew something was the matter. I

BOONE STOP

looked out the window, but there wasn't any cyclone.

When I got down-stairs there was a light in the parlor, and I listened, but I couldn't hear anybody crying, so I knew no one was dead. Pa was sitting in the plush rocker, dressed in his Sunday clothes, with his brown coat buttoned up to his chin like a Quaker. He was sitting with his hands clasped in front of his breast, with his eyes turned to heaven.

"Call the men at once," said Ma. "Bring them to Pa. He wants to see them."

She was excited, and I began to tremble, too. I rushed up-stairs to tell the men, and then to the barn to awaken the ones in the haymow. The men came down, stuffing their shirt-tails in and carrying their shoes in their hands, running over the cobs in the lot on the way to the house. The parlor was already filled with men, with others in the sitting-room, and a few standing on the porch, with their hairy breasts showing over their undershirts. But they were not looking at one another. They were all looking at Pa as he sat there without moving, his eyes turned to heaven.

Pa lowered his eyes, but he was looking over and beyond the men. Slowly, in his deep voice, he began to speak:

"Men, I have called you together to tell you the great and glorious news. As I lay sleeping to-night the most wonderful thing in the world happened. At first faint and far away, and then gradually growing closer, I heard a voice calling me. 'Awake! arise!' it said, 'and come with me. Come with me

BOONE STOP

to the heights and I will show ye the glory of the kingdom.' I followed, and we came to a great height, and I looked out and saw the world. I saw people coming and going and cities on the plains and cattle in the yoke and souls going to ruin. 'Those are ye to save,' said the voice. 'Prepare for them the way, for soon the world will be no more. Go forth and preach to every living creature, for death and destruction will soon be among ye.'

"'Who are you?' I cried.

"'I am the Angel of the Lord,' and the figure passed from me in a wave of glory. I found myself sitting up in bed. Where my body had been I know not. But I had gone to the height, and now I bring ye together that ye may rejoice and seek salvation."

Pa stopped as abruptly as he had begun, and held out his hands in a sweep of supplication. He began to describe the destruction that was to come when the earth should be blotted out and the moon turned to blood in the twinkling of an eye, and, taking up the Bible, he read Revelation. The men looked at one another to see who should lead the sentiment.

Then Nova Gooch spoke: "I guess it's all right for them as believe, but I don't take much stock in it myself. I had an aunt once who heard noises at night, but they come and locked her up."

"This was the Angel of the Lord," said Pa, "and he came to save all those who believe."

Nova Gooch began slouching toward the door. "Well, I believe, all right, but my belief is that I am goin' to bed. If the Angel calls again you can just tell it that I will take my chances in the haymow."

The door slammed behind him and we could hear

BOONE STOP

him tramping over the corn-cobs on the way to the barn. Pa said nothing, but when Nova was gone he lifted his eyes to heaven and moved his lips.

Sitting down at the organ, Ma began to play, and some of the men started to sing. I guess it wasn't very much singing as far as style went, but we felt the power among us. No one could hear Pa talk without feeling it. Some of the men had tears in their eyes and Pa was still talking to them when Ma came and took me off to bed.

But we got to sleep late the next morning, because it was raining. That afternoon Nova Gooch, going home through the field, stopped under a cottonwood as a shower came up, and was killed by lightning, and soon after that we made preparations to move away.

That was the first time the Angel of the Lord ever came to visit us.

II

I go to school and get a beating, and Pa prays till I think my knees will crack. Fino, the Human Fish, swears under his breath and saves another life.

ONE morning a year later, after we had moved to Rutherford, Pa called me to get up for breakfast; but I closed my eyes and thought I would take a few winks more. The next thing I knew Pa was standing over me with his lips together. He never called anybody but once. You had to move, and move quickly, when he spoke to you.

"Honor thy father and thy mother in the days of thy youth," he said, and, sitting down on the edge of the bed, he pulled me over his knees. He began to apply his hand, and to apply it hard. When Pa started in to do a thing he always made a thorough job of it—especially when he was disciplining me. He kept coming down harder and harder, and every time he landed I stiffened out like when you hold a frog by the foot and stick him with a pin.

"Isom! Isom!" came Gran'ma's voice up the stairs. "The horses are out."

Pa stopped with his hand lifted and stepped to

BOONE STOP

the window. Sure enough, the horses were trampling up the garden. With that, Pa went clumping downstairs and I followed as soon as I could get my pants on. Gran'ma gave me a hug and patted me on the back. Then I began to wonder how the horses had got loose at just the right moment.

Pa was straight and tall, and wore his hair to his shoulders because they wore it that way in the Bible. He didn't talk very much, but when he said anything that ended it. Nobody ever argued back with Pa.

Pa looked down the table to see if all heads were bowed, and then asked a blessing. Whenever Pa had to come up-stairs to get me he always asked a long and particularly fervent blessing, and although he didn't call anybody by name, I always knew who the sinner was. His blessing covered everything; it recited our weaknesses, beginning with humanity in general, dismissing that for the wickedness of the nation at large, going from that to our state, passing from that to the sinfulness and wastefulness of the present generation, and gradually narrowing down till he got to me. My broad faults were taken up, then my specific shortcomings were laid bare, and finally he closed by reminding me that all children should honor their parents in the days of their youth, and especially on mornings when they were tempted to sloth.

After the chores were done Pa took Mid and Susie and me and a kettle of eggs to town. We were to be entered up in school. I felt that something would happen, because at a new school you've got to take care of yourself.

BOONE STOP

Well, let them come on. I am a pretty good fighter.

A trained-dog show was just putting up its tents on a vacant lot. A monkey was sunning and scratching and enjoying itself on the back of a horse. A banner stretched from the blacksmith shop to the Greensfelder Grocery read:

MADAME RISTINE's TRAINED PONY
and DOG Show

Entertaining and Educating For Refined LADIES

The show had just moved in and was getting straightened around for the first performance. The monkey seemed to be happy; it turned its wrinkled face to study us a moment, and then went back to its scratching. It did not have to go to school.

A tall blonde came out and lammed a rock at a stray dog. The dog went yowling down the street. It was Madame Ristine.

"Work of the devil," said Pa, slapping the lines.

Everything that interested me seemed to be mixed up with the devil. Pa was always fighting the devil. But I didn't care anything about the devil; I would rather have a good time.

Pa explained to the principal that we had just moved to Rutherford and that he wanted to start us in school. The principal asked us some questions and assigned Mid and me to Miss Neff's room.

"This is Cleveland Seed," said Pa, pointing to me, "and the other is Midlothian Seed. I named them myself," he finished, hanging his hat on his kneecap.

BOONE STOP

"If he merits punishment under your control, mete it out to him," said Pa, meaning me, "and send word to me and I'll give him another when he gets home. Send word by Midlothian." Then Pa quoted in his praying voice, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die."

That was like Pa. He was always afraid that people would think that he was being too easy on us—especially on me.

One of the boys across the aisle from me tried to show me my place, but I could rub my stomach and pat my head as well as he could. I was pretty smart. When he put his thumb up to his nose and worked his fingers I put both thumbs up. He couldn't do anything but what I could do it bigger. But when he put his sponge in his mouth and swallowed it out of sight I found I couldn't do that, so I pretended not to be interested. There's nothing that hurts anybody so much as pretending not to see the things they shine in. When he drew a picture of Pa with whiskers to his stomach I looked straight at him and spit a fine stream. I was not going to let him make fun of Pa. Then he swallowed his sponge again and I bent a pin and put it under him. It made him jump and squeal out.

The teacher came back and wanted to know what was the matter, and he told her. That was the kind of boy he was.

"What made you do such a thing, Cleveland?" she asked.

"Because I wanted to," I said, and bit my lips to show that I didn't care what happened.

BOONE STOP

"I'm astonished at you. Are you going to be the bad boy of the school?"

If I said "no" I would be giving in, so I said I didn't know. That wasn't saying anything one way or the other.

"I'm surprised at you, and especially after what your father said this morning. I guess he knew the kind of boy you were. Report to the superintendent; you'll feel differently about it when he gets through with you."

The superintendent was a tall, lank man with three lodge buttons.

"What is your name?" he asked, pulling his glasses down as if his nose had been laid off on a scale.

"Cleveland Seed."

"How old are you?"

"Twelve."

Fumbling through the papers on his desk, he found Miss Neff's report. "'For mistreating another boy and being impertinent to his teacher.' I'll show you that isn't the way to start school off. Take off your coat."

Swish! the stick cut through the air. I drew my back up like when a cat thinks you are going to throw it off a roof and pulled in my stomach. He kept on till my eyes filled with tears, but I wasn't going to cry.

"Are you sorry?" he asked, catching his breath.

"No."

"What's that impudent answer?" he panted. Taking off his glasses, he put them on the table.

"You heard what I said."

He seized the whip in both hands. "There!" he said, stopping for breath.

BOONE STOP

Seeing my back quivering, he thought I was crying, but I wasn't. I'm not that kind.

"I guess that 'll teach you a lesson," he said, but he didn't ask me if I was sorry. If he had I would have told him the truth.

At the Greensfelder Grocery I found Mid. "Come quick!" he gasped. "Something's the matter with Pa. He's hunting for you everywhere. His eyes are queer and he looks straight ahead and keeps talking to himself."

We found him coming out of the New York One Price Store, mumbling under his breath.

"At last you are found. Come and flee with me before the wrath to come."

Climbing into our hack, we rattled home. Not one word did he ask about school, nor if I had been punished. His thoughts were not of the earth. Jerking off the harness, he hung it on the pegs without stopping to see whether the hames went in front or behind. When he hung up the collars he got them buckle end up, so that they would draw down and pinch the horses' necks. Never before had I seen Pa do anything when it wasn't done exactly right.

"Tell them to gather in the parlor," said Pa, without stopping to feed the horses.

Only on weddings and funerals was our parlor used, but there wasn't any preacher at the house. Placing the big leather Bible on his knees, Pa began turning the pages, his rough thumb making a crackling sound.

"I have had you gather at this unusual hour to impart to you a most important message—some-

BOONE STOP

thing that I have prayed for and yet dreaded. This noon something very sweet, very wonderful, and yet very awful happened to me. As I sat reading the Bible I fell asleep—something very rare with me during the daylight hours. It wasn't sleep so much as it was a blotting out of surrounding detail, and while I was thus unconscious I was visited by the Angel. There was no rush of wings, no flutter of robes—just a gradual dawning, like the coming of morning. Then the Angel spoke to me in pleasing tone, low and musical and filled with love, saying that the end of the world was at hand and for me to watch and pray, and that it would be revealed to me when the sun was to be blotted out, when the heavens would be darkened and all sin punished. I started to speak, but the vision faded and was gone.

"A great work has been given us to do. We must go about preaching to the world that the end is near. I never felt so near the Holy Seat in my life as I have since the Angel visited me. There was a sweetness and nobleness about it that filled me with awe. I shall heed its word and go into the world and preach the gospel to every living creature. I shall give up my life from now on to carrying out the Angel's commands and telling the world that the end is upon us.

"We will now pray," said Pa, and, getting down on our knees, we buried our faces in our hands. I thought my knees would crack, but Pa kept on, and when I got up Pa looked at me reprovingly for thinking of the flesh. But I couldn't help it. Even though the world was coming to an end, my knees hurt just the same.

BOONE STOP

The next morning after breakfast we went into the parlor, and Pa prayed. When he arose, I asked a bit too eagerly, I guess:

"Do you want me to go with you to-day to save the world?"

"No. You go to school. We shall continue our activities as usual until the time is revealed. The Angel will come again. Remember, my son, if you are punished at school, you will receive the same at home."

What would he say if he knew that I had already had one?

Slipping off from Mid on the way home from school, I bought some licorice, and was standing in front of a pool-hall, watching some wicked men play pool, when Mid came up before I noticed.

"I want some of that," he said.

"I haven't got any on me," I said, and held out the sack behind me. I was telling him the truth, because it wasn't on me. It was behind me.

He started on down the street and I turned back to watch the wicked men, and the next thing I knew he had tiptoed up behind me and grabbed it. But it didn't take me long to get it away from him. Mid wasn't much of a fighter.

"I'm going to tell Pa about you getting licked yesterday," said Mid, and went off down the street, blubbering. He wasn't much to have as a brother.

I lost all interest in the men going to hell. I had myself to think about. Mid would tell Pa, and Pa would chastise me like the Bible said. Things looked pretty black—with the world coming to an end and Pa one ahead of me.

BOONE STOP

I began poking along behind Mid, wondering what I could stuff my pants with, when I almost bumped into Madame Ristine with a dozen dogs on a leash. Drawing up, she looked me over.

"Boy, do you want to earn some money?"

I guess she saw my answer.

"Well, then, come on down to the tent with me. I've got a dog act I think you could work in fine."

When we got to the circus tent Madame Ristine took the dogs inside and unfastened them from their leashes. A battered trunk was open, with a lot of spangles and short skirts showing. Things were pretty smelly, but the dogs didn't seem to mind.

"We're short a hand, and I'll pay you to fill in," said Madame Ristine, with her head in the trunk. "Get into these things and then help the dogs to dress."

She held up a pair of velvet knee-breeches. They had been worn by somebody who was too big for them and who had sweat a good deal. By the way she had talked I had counted on being more than just an assistant to a dog. I looked around for some place to put the pants on.

"We haven't a minute to lose," said Madame Ristine.

"Where'll I go?"

Madame Ristine stopped with a dog half in a sweater, and looked at me. "Right here. What do you think this is—the Waldorf-Astoria? Nobody's going to look at your legs." Madame Ristine was a plain-speaking woman; she did not know that they should be called limbs.

I could undress before a gang in swimming and

BOONE STOP

not think anything about it, but now it was different. Going over behind a trunk with the lid up, I decided to take a chance, and had just got out of my pants when a girl with freckles came in and banged the lid down. I knew I would never like her.

I scrooged down and stuffed the velvet pants in my lap.

She turned and looked at me. "Who let this in? Is he in the dog act?"

I knew again that I would never like her. Pa's words kept coming back to me, "Work of the devil."

"If you will go out I will put my clothes on," I said, in my haughty manner.

"Listen to him talk. Ain't he exclusive?"

"You're no lady or you wouldn't stay here," I said.

"Oh, law me! He thinks he's a star!"

The suit wasn't much of a fit, and it kept coming back to me that somebody had been wearing it on hot days. It was all pretty good except one leg, which was ripped a bit, and the green had run and somebody had sat down on some chewing-gum.

"You look great," said Madame Ristine, looking at the colored suit and my long straw hair. "You look as if you had been caught on a limb. Would you like to be a regular actor?" She had a way of jumping from one thing to another.

"No'm. I'm going to bury dead horses when I grow up."

"Acting's more refined. Wouldn't you like to travel with me and the dogs?"

"I'm not very well acquainted with the dogs," I answered.

BOONE STOP

"Can you dance?" she asked, in her abrupt way.

I could. A dancer had come to the opera-house once and he could jig beautifully, and kept stepping over his feet, back and forth, and not falling down, and always coming out even with the music. I had practised it in our hay-loft till I could do most of the things myself, but I had never let Pa know. He would have said it was the work of the devil and proceeded to take it out of me.

"Yes," I said, "I had thought about being a dancer until I had found out how much there was in the dead-horse business."

"Can you really step 'em off?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"All right. I'll just try you out. Orlando!"

A little thin man with a twist of hair like a turnip-top got down off a trunk where he was sewing a button on his uniform and came over.

"Give us a little music. I want to see how this boy uses his feet."

Mumbling under his breath, Orlando fastened a mouth-organ around his neck, took a fiddle between his knees, and put his foot on a thing that would thump the bass drum. Picking up a cow-bell, he was ready. Orlando was talented but disagreeable.

Getting out on the floor, I began to shuffle my feet and jump over my foot, like the man at the opera-house.

"Smile," called out Madame Ristine. "There ain't anybody sick. Remember, an audience always wants to see people happy."

Diving into a trunk, Madame Ristine came up with a little round leather cap. "Put this on,"

BOONE STOP

she said. "I want to see if we can't put on our old flag turn."

Fitting the cap on me, she lifted up Roscoe, the dog, and made him stand on my head. And then I had to dance with Roscoe standing quivering on my head. It was all right except once in a while when he would lose his balance and step in my ear. I saw that if Roscoe and I were going to act together his toe-nails would have to be cut.

Madame Ristine seemed pleased with my dancing. "Isn't he sweet!" she said when I stopped. It made me feel pretty good. "Bless his heart," she said, "he needs a bath." And then I saw she meant Roscoe. "You're not so bad," said Madame Ristine, in her frank way. "Stick around and I'll put you on this evening, and if you make good I'll give you a regular job. The last man we had got hit with a tent-pole and died before we got him to the hospital."

No more dead horses for me. I would be a dancer and see the world.

It was a long wait till time for the show, and especially with only some bananas to eat that I found in a bag. While I was waiting I found Fino the Human Fish sitting on a box, cleaning his ear with his finger. When he was through his ears he turned his attention to his nose, and when he was through with that he got out his knife and began on his finger-nails. Fino the Human Fish may have been a good swimmer and seen the world, but it seemed to me he should have been more private about such things.

While I was waiting around I found a bag of

BOONE STOP

bananas and ate them. It wasn't much of a supper, but it was better than just watching Fino getting himself ready.

"All right," said Madame Ristine to Fino. "Get out in front and start it off."

Unhooking a knee, Fino arose, a section at a time, pulled his dirty bath-robe over him, and went to the box in front of the tent. Putting on a Turkish fez, Orlando followed him. Orlando pounded on a bell with a tack-hammer till a crowd came up. Then he began to describe the wonders of Madame Ristine's Trained Pony and Dog Circus, telling how much entertainment might be derived for a dime, the tenth part of a dollar; what an impressive sight it was to see those dumb creatures acting with all the intelligence of living people; and finished by telling what a wonderful educational feature the circus was. I hadn't half appreciated the circus.

Then he called the crowd's attention to Fino the Human Fish.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I want to call to your attention one of the world's greatest curiosities, one of the world's greatest scientific marvels, a phenomenon of nature that has baffled the greatest scientists of the age, a human being without a parallel, combining the functions of a man with the properties of a fish." With that Fino took off his faded bath-robe and folded his arms impressively. "Look and behold of his wonderful chest development. He swims side by side with the fishes and is equally at home in the ocean or the parlor—especially in the ocean. He reads underwater and eats before your eyes. Fino the Human Fish is one

BOONE STOP

of the wonders of the world and one of the most costly attractions before the American people. If you wish to talk with him after the performance you will be surprised and delighted to find him intelligent."

With that one of the most valuable attractions before the American people went into the tent and began dressing the dogs.

The crowd came flocking in.

When I got inside Madame Ristine had nearly all the dogs dressed. Some of them were dressed like grandmothers, and some had whiskers.

"Ring her up," called Madame Ristine, and Fino pulled the wire.

It was a play. One of the dogs went to a corner saloon to get a bucket of beer, but he stayed too long and when he came out he was three sheets in the wind and tried to snatch a lady's pocket-book. She hopped over on her hind feet to a policeman, and the policeman chased the intoxicated individual around till finally he got him by the collar. The officer turned in an alarm and a monkey driving a police wagon came on the run. The officer pushed the drunken man into the patrol and all of them dashed away to the police station. It was too funny for anything, and especially the monkey with a bonnet tied under its chin. Once in a while it would pull off the bonnet and throw it on the floor and stamp on it; that was funnier than ever, but Madame Ristine didn't think so.

After Madame Ristine had led off the educated horse, Orlando, the orchestra, struck up, and Fino came on and made a speech and said that millions

BOONE STOP

of years ago man had lived in the ocean and swum with the fishes and had gills, but now he didn't have gills any more. Fino put his finger between his fourth and fifth ribs to show where his gills had been and went on to explain that man had been on land so long that the gills had dried up and gone away. Then he said that he had an atavism, which was the reason that he could eat, drink, and sleep underwater. It showed how educated he was.

I asked Madame Ristine what an atavism was.

"He's a fine-educated man when he's sober," she said. "An atavism is when you got something your ancestors had thousands and thousands of years ago. You have hair on parts of your body because your ancestors used to have it all over them. A horse used to have five toes on each foot, but now it's got only one and we call it a hoof. That toe is an atavism of all the rest. It's fine for impressing an audience."

Climbing up the ladder, Fino dived into the glass-front tank and showed how to save a rubber dummy from drowning. The rubber dummy didn't have any face and was getting full of water pretty fast, so that Fino had to hurry.

"Now I will show you the marvel of the age," said Fino, over the side of the tank. "It is an atavism that has baffled the greatest scientists of all ages. I have been examined by doctors in every land and clime, and none have understood what I am about to show. Call it what you will, explain it how you may, this atavism alone is worth the price of admission."

With that he reached over the side of the tank for

BOONE STOP

the paper bag. He drew up his face. I could see that the atavism wasn't there. He began to get mad. I couldn't blame him, for I understood how one must feel when he has about the only atavism in the world and somebody has mislaid it. Climbing over the side of the tank, he went swishing across the stage, leaving a trail behind him like a baptizing.

"Where are them bananas?" he snapped.

They were the ones I had eaten, but I hadn't known they were his atavisms. I tried to slip away, but he came up and clamped a hand on my shoulder.

"Did you get them bananas?"

"I—I ate them, but I thought they were just plain bananas."

"You idiot, coming around and eating up everything you can get your hands on!"

"Go back and save another life," ordered Madame Ristine, "and I'll send this lumphead for some more."

When I got back Fino the Human Fish was still saving lives, but he was swearing a good deal.

"It's your turn now," said Madame Ristine, as Fino the Human Fish came out of the water, and with that she pushed me out on the stage in my fancy pants.

The whole town seemed to be there, one row rising above the other. It was all I could do to keep my knees from giving way under me.

"Shove off," said Madame Ristine. "Get rid of that cemetery look."

I pushed one foot in front of the other and trusted my weight on it. It bore me long enough to bring up the other and pretty soon I had them both going at once. I began to dance, and to enjoy it, back-

BOONE STOP

ward and forward with every fancy step that I could think of. I didn't care how many people there were; the more the better. Madame Ristine put my leather cap on and stood Roscoe on it and put a flag in his mouth. It made the audience cheer.

While I was taking long, steady steps to keep Roscoe from stepping in my ear, I saw a tall figure in brown coming down the aisle. It was Pa, and he had his chin up. Orlando saw something was wrong and stopped the music, which made it worse. I started to dodge off the stage, but Pa crooked a finger, the end enlarged and calloused from work, and came slowly toward me, while I stood as though hypnotized, because Pa had power.

"What does this mean?" demanded Madame Ristine.

Pa fastened his eye on her. "It means sin and corruption and the devil. If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Up the aisle I followed him, Pa looking straight ahead, his chin raised as if he was meeting the devil. It was pretty bitter, after my glory of a few minutes before, to be led out this way. Heads turned to follow us, row after row, till we got to the door.

"Come," said Pa, after I had changed clothes. "Come with me before a Hand from on High strikes you dead."

Down the middle of the street we started, because Pa didn't have much use for sidewalks. The world was against me. The superintendent had licked me, Fino hated me because I had eaten his atavism bananas, I didn't have any use for the girl with the

BOONE STOP

freckles, and now Pa was two ahead of me. Mrs. Naylor's dog came up behind me and touched my hand with his cold nose. I jumped as though they had come for me. But it was a comfort to have something around that didn't want to correct me.

At the kitchen door Pa paused and spoke: "I shall allow you one day of prayer and meditation, and then to-morrow evening the flesh and the devil will be subdued."

With that he passed in, leaving me to the flesh and the devil.

III

I have functional stomach trouble and want to talk about Jesse James, but Susie prefers history. Pa eats with his head down and throws a railroad man over the fence.

I SLEPT well. It takes more than the flesh and the devil to keep me from sleeping. I got out as soon as I heard Pa shaking down the kitchen stove. I would be good to-day and maybe Pa would change his mind about subduing my two enemies. I would go down and do the chores without being called. Then I began to think how suspicious this would seem. Pa couldn't be fooled by anything like that. If I wanted to get out of the licking I would have to find a better way.

I knew what I would do. I would play sick. He wouldn't whip me and I wouldn't have to go to school. That was a good idea, but what disease would I have? I couldn't have anything ordinary. I would have to get something fancy. Pa couldn't be fooled by any common disease.

Slipping down-stairs, I got down the family doctor-book covered with oilcloth and began to study up on symptoms. When I counted the number of pages I felt awed to think that I wasn't dead. The man

BOONE STOP

who wrote the book knew what he was doing; he could make them plain. I seemed to have most of them, especially by the time I got to the S's, "The Stomach and Its Diseases." I might just as well have something the matter with my stomach as anything. It was an easy place to point to. The diseases were all divided off into organic and functional. I decided to have just the functional ones.

Going back, I slipped into bed and began to groan so that Mid would give the word.

"Can't you leave a fellow alone?" he grumbled.

"I haven't got much longer to live," I said, and kind of sobbed. "If I have ever done anything wrong to you I want you to forgive me."

Propping himself up on one elbow, Mid looked at me while I rolled my eyes. Slipping out, Mid went hurrying down-stairs, and in a minute I heard Pa on the steps.

I began to mumble and groan and talk about the atavism bananas, and it worked.

"He's out of his head," whispered Mid.

Coming up, Pa put his hand on my forehead. "He hasn't any fever," he said to Ma. "Let me see your tongue."

I showed it to him.

"Now your throat." Taking a spoon he pressed down, and twisted his head around to get the light right. I thought he would press something out of place, but he didn't.

"His throat is all right, too," he said, in an undertone, to Ma. Then he said to me, "Where is the pain?"

Weakly I opened my eyes as if it took a long time

BOONE STOP

to understand, then pointed to the place. "I'm afraid it's functional stomach trouble," I said.

"He ate a lot of licorice yesterday," put in Mid, "and it had been in with the tobacco."

"If it's his stomach I can soon fix it," said Pa.

With that he started down-stairs for the family medicine-chest. That was more than I had counted on. I didn't want to be doctored. I just wanted to be slowly nursed back to health on grape-juice.

"What I want is peace and quiet," I said, making my hand tremble.

Pa had got the medicine-chest from a traveling-man and it was guaranteed to cure anything. On the inside of the lid was printed its name, "The Silent Doctor." The bottles were numbered so that it was an easy thing to know what medicine to give. All you had to do was to look down the alphabetical list on the inside of the lid till you found the ailment. If you had measles, 16 and 42 would save you a doctor bill, but if it turned out you had something else it kind of set things back.

When Pa started down for the assistance of The Silent Doctor I knew then that I had made a mistake. It hadn't occurred to me that Pa would trust The Silent Doctor for such a dangerous thing as functional stomach trouble.

"I think this will help him," said Pa, giving a black bottle a shake. It was Perry Davis's Pain-Killer. I would rather have a double-handed licking any time than a dose of Pain-Killer. You can't rub the Pain-Killer. It was like swallowing a live coal and water not doing any good.

BOONE STOP

"It's just plain stomach-ache," said Pa, pouring out a tablespoonful.

"No, it isn't," I said, quickly. "You can look it up in the book."

"What does the child mean?" asked Ma.

"I've read of it in the doctor-book," I said, "and I know the symptoms."

But Pa didn't pay any attention; he just kept coming toward me with his thick finger-nails clamped over the thin handle of the spoon. Pretending to be delirious, I threw out my hands, and the spoon rattled to the floor.

"I feel better than I did awhile ago," I said, hopefully. "Maybe it will wear off."

"Just another delirium," said Pa, in the grim way he could say things sometimes, and, filling up the spoon, came edging toward me again. Ma put her hand behind the pillow and raised me up. Catching hold of my nose with one hand, Pa poured down the Pain-Killer with the other. It burned a streak about as wide as a baby ribbon. Not having anything to eat since yesterday but atavism bananas made it worse.

I think we'll soon hear a favorable report," said Pa, and went down-stairs, with Ma following. His face looked kind of easy, as if he wanted to smile, and I would have thought so except Pa did not smile very often.

Hitching up after breakfast, Pa started to take us from our house to school, because it was a good ways for Susie to walk. As we were driving along, Pa suddenly drew up on the lines and jammed on the brake. He could always see things quicker than I could.

BOONE STOP

"What does this mean?" he said, looking toward some men digging on our land. One was carrying a white flag, while another was looking through a spy-glass on three legs. Behind them were half a dozen other men with short-handled axes in their belts.

"I suppose this is for the new railroad, but they can't go through there," said Pa. "That's my land and I will never give them permission. I will warn them, and if they don't get off—" He did not finish the sentence. Then he said, in his praying voice, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone."

That was all he said, and drove on, and I didn't think much more about it. I reckoned it would blow over.

Miss Neff was pretty hard pressed for problems, because she told me to figure out, if it took a hen and a half a day and a half to lay an egg and a half how long would it take to lay twenty-one eggs. You would not think they would put problems like that in the arithmetic, because anybody would know that a half a hen couldn't lay. Even if it could you could wait and see.

I never saw half a hen but once. A covered wagon passed our house one day and they had a chicken without a head. The man charged ten cents to look at it. He had started to cut the chicken's head off and the hatchet had wobbled so he had cut off just the top. It had only one eye and its head was pretty scabby. Gran'ma said that it made her shudder to look at it, but it didn't me. I can look at anything. But that was the only half-chicken I

BOONE STOP

ever saw. I guess the man who wrote the arithmetic had seen the same one.

When I held up my hand and told Miss Neff that I knew the answer and she asked me what it was, and I said half a hen can't lay, she kept me in after school. She said I was altogether too smart. But I wasn't. I just knew more about hens than she did. You can't fool me on things I know something about. If it had been an ostrich I wouldn't have been so sure.

Mid and Susie had gone on ahead, so I had to walk home alone. There wasn't much to do but to throw rocks at mail-boxes and see how close I could come to a window-light without breaking it.

As I was passing our land I heard voices. Ducking under the wire without catching my coat, I parted the corn-stalks and crept closer. In an open place where the corn had been cut away was Pa, surrounded by half a dozen railroad men. His head was thrown back and in his hands was a blacksnake whip.

"Don't you dare touch another hill," said Pa. It wasn't that he said it so loud as much as the way he said it. I had never seen Pa so mad before, except once when a neighbor tried to work on Sunday and Pa had gone to him to offer to help the next day if he wouldn't go on cutting his wheat on the Lord's Day. The man had laughed in his face and told him to mind his business and that he would work when he damned pleased. With that Pa went for him, and it took three men to get Pa off.

"I haven't given my consent for you to go through my private property," said Pa. "You shall not

BOONE STOP

trespass." I couldn't help admiring Pa, big and tall as he was, his tangled hair to his shoulders and his beard falling to his fourth button.

"It's too bad you haven't given your consent," sneered the head flagman. "It's really too bad. Don't you know you can't stop a railroad?"

"I shall protect my property. No corporation can build through my land without my consent. I warn you off." Raising his arm Pa pointed to the road.

Shading his eyes as if he was looking, the flagman answered, mockingly, "I don't see any place I like better, so I just guess we'll stay."

Raising the blacksnake, Pa gave it a jerk. It popped in an inch of the man's face. "Get off this instant."

The man jumped back with his hand before his eyes, and started to run, stumbling across the cornridges, with Pa behind him. On the safe ground of the public road he began calling Pa names and making jokes about his long hair and brown clothes. Pa's only answer was to lean over the fence and say, more to himself than to the man:

"Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their railings."

The other men looked at one another. Never before had they heard such an answer and before Pa's steady gaze they began to grow uneasy.

"He's a religious bug," said one of them, and they began to call him names.

Still and straight Pa stood and looked them in the eye until they stopped, and then he said, quietly, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and

BOONE STOP

persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," and as he said the last three words he lifted his eyes.

Turning, he started away, but he had gone only a short distance when the men were back with their corn-knives, cutting down more corn. Pa saw them, but instead of coming back he walked on toward the house. This was not much like Pa.

"What's the matter, Isom?" said Ma, when she saw Pa.

"Transgressors and trespassers are on our land. I warned them off, but they paid no heed." That was all he said about how he had driven them off; to him it wasn't worth mentioning. "I have counseled with them and they heeded not, and now I am going to take the law into mine own hands." Often when Pa was thinking hard and under stress of excitement, he would fall into Bible talk. "If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity." With that he reached up on the wall and took down the shot-gun from its straps. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Keep ye judgment and do justice.'"

Ma bit her lips till there was a white line, and Gran'ma looked at him and tried to speak, but no words came.

Putting in a cartridge, Pa snapped the barrel shut, while Ma laid her hand on his arm.

"Please don't."

"It's my duty," he said, simply. "The Book says you shall defend your house even with your life."

If Pa went among them with the gun, no telling what would happen. Slowly he walked across the

BOONE STOP

floor, and at the door paused, outlined against the West, with the gun in the hollow of his arm.

"They have sown and now they shall reap."

He was starting out when Susie came up and laid her hand on his arm. She could do things with him that none of the rest of us could.

"I wish you would help me with my arithmetic. It's so hard." She held out the book to him, with a slate-pencil between the pages.

Taking the book, he read the problem over, and sat down to work it out. It was about the hen and a half. I knew that if he stayed long enough to solve that that we needn't worry.

Ma put the gun back in its straps without Pa noticing, and began to look easier.

After supper Pa fastened his eyes on me and cleared his throat. I knew that he was going to suppress the flesh and the devil.

"Cleveland," said Pa, "you shall spend the night in the seed-room. That will give you plenty of time to wrestle with the flesh."

Things buzzed around. The punishment for the flesh and the devil was to be worse than I thought. The seed-room was a big, boarded-up bin in the barn, with seed corn hanging on wires overhead to keep the rats away. Along the walls were cultivator shovels with the points in the cracks, smeared with axle grease to keep them from rusting. Even in the daytime you could see the rats' eyes.

"It will be a long night," said Pa, "but no longer than you need to see the error of your ways. Punishment of the flesh seems to do little good; now it shall be of the spirit."

BOONE STOP

As I was going out Gran'ma said, "Come here a moment, Clevie," and when I went over she slipped some hoarhound candy into my pocket. Then she patted me on the back with her crooked wrist and said, "Be a good boy, Clevie."

Taking the key from the nail under the clock-shelf, Pa opened the seed-room door and locked me in. Reaching out my hand to find my way about the room, I got it smeared with grease from the cultivator shovels. I wiped it on a gunny sack and sat down on a candy-bucket to subdue my flesh, but I couldn't do much thinking about my sins. I was thinking more about how to get out. I never seem to be able to think about the things that I should. About half the time when Pa prayed I would be thinking about fighting.

The key turned in the lock awhile after, but it wasn't Pa, because Pa never changed his mind. It was Susie. She had slipped the key from the nail.

"I'm going to stay with you," she said, and, climbing through the door, she lit a candle.

The candle went lower and lower, while I kept hitching my bucket nearer and nearer Susie's. Then the candle gave a flicker, and the dark came down on us like when you draw up a load of hay on the fork and trip it and it falls, spreading out and making everything dark and blowing your hat off. That was the way the darkness seemed to come down on us.

I started in to do the rest of what Pa wanted me to do by wrestling with my soul, but the first thing I would know I would be thinking of the best way to lick the railroad men. I knew that it was wrong

BOONE STOP

to start in to wrestle with my flesh and end up by fighting, but I couldn't help it, so I said, "Let's talk about something."

"All right," said Susie. "We'll talk about history."

"No," I said, "let's not talk about anything unpleasant. Let's talk about Jesse James."

Then Susie said that robbers were worse than history.

"Yes," I said, "but more interesting."

So we compromised on Henry VIII.

"You tell about him," I said, because she knew such things. Susie was good at history, but she couldn't fight.

"Henry Eighth had a full beard and wore feathers in his hat," she began.

"I'll bet he wasn't much of a king."

"Yes, he was in some ways—especially when it came to marrying. He was engaged to Catherine Aragon four years and married her when he was eighteen. But after a while he got tired of her and wanted to marry Anne Boleyn because she was better-looking, and he married her. It's easy for a king to get married. All he has to do is to pick out the lady he wants and tell her to get ready. Then he got tired of Anne Boleyn and had her beheaded. That was his way—if he didn't like a wife he would turn her over to the sheriff. The day after Anne Boleyn was executed, and while the crêpe was still on the front door, he married Jane Seymour. When she died he sent Thomas Cromwell out to get him another. Cromwell looked all around and finally fixed it up with Anne Cleves.

BOONE STOP

She was awfully homely, but Henry Eighth was a king and couldn't go back on his word, so he bit his lips and married her. But he never got over what Cromwell had done to him, so he had him beheaded. The very day the guillotine cut Cromwell's head off, Henry Eighth married Catharine Howard. Pretty soon he got tired of her, too, and called in the sheriff. Then he looked around and picked out Catharine Parr and led her to—"

"To the guillotine?"

"No, to the altar, and she outlived him and laid him away."

"I think we might just as well talk about Jesse James," I said; but she didn't want to.

"Can't we find something more cheerful to talk about?" said Susie.

"Let's talk about bull-fighting."

Susie shivered.

"Do you suppose there is a cellar under here?" I asked, after thinking awhile.

"Why?"

"Don't you remember how the Bender family of Kansas had a cellar under their house, and when anybody came along and asked to stay all night they would hit them on the head with an ax and drop them through the trap-door into the cellar?"

"Let's not talk about it," said Susie. "Let's talk about court receptions."

I was ashamed of myself, for everything I started to talk about ended in blood. So I told her to go ahead.

"They have it at the king's palace and there is a whole line of fine ladies shaking hands with men in

BOONE STOP

knee pants. The men have lace on their sleeves and kiss the ladies' hands. The king sits on the throne and looks haughty. When the people come by they kneel at his feet, but he doesn't pay any attention to them—he just looks over their heads."

"Does he wear his crown all the time?" I asked.

"No. Why?"

"I was just wondering—does he wear it to the beheadings?"

I was sorry I spoke, but it slipped out before I thought, so we stopped talking and remained quiet. Suddenly out of the silence came the creak of a hinge. Some one was opening the barn door in the horse part.

"Had we better take it outside or do it in here?" asked a voice.

"Outside. I guess this 'll teach him not to get funny with us."

"We'll show him that two can play at this game as well as one."

As we listened we could tell they were the railroad men and that they had come to cut up Pa's harness. The pride of Pa's life was his teams and harness. His teams were always sleek and fat and he always had his harness oiled.

In a few moments the harness would be worthless. I trembled at Pa's fury when he should find it out. He would attack the whole railroad. I tried to think of a way to stop them, but my head only buzzed around without getting anywhere. If we made a noise they would find us; if we didn't stop them the harness would be cut to pieces.

While I was listening to them Susie slipped out

BOONE STOP

without a word. I started to follow, but stepped on a grain of corn. It made a noise like shoveling up ashes.

"What's that?" gasped one of the men.

They stood still, listening. I could hear them breathing.

I began to pray. I never think about praying till I get in a tight fix, and then it's the first thing I think of. But I guess the prayer wasn't long enough, because down came a cultivator shovel with an awful clatter.

"What's that?"

"We'll see," said the other, and began climbing over the manger to investigate. Edging behind some gunny sacks hanging on the wall, I pulled them around me.

The men looked in the door, while one of them struck a match.

"I don't see anything," said one.

"What's that?" asked the other. "Look! the sack's moving."

A gunny sack was still swinging.

"Only a rat running up it, I guess."

"I don't care, I'm going to see." Lifting a foot, he started to get in, when a crash sounded against the barn. The men jumped as if it had been a shot, and blew out the match with a breath three times as heavy as needed. Without a word the two men dashed down the barn lot, making as much noise as a drove of hogs.

A moment later I heard Susie's voice. "Cleve! Cleve! where are you?"

"Did you hear that awful noise?"

BOONE STOP

"Yes," she said. "Do you want to hear it again?"

"What do you mean?"

"I made it."

"Made it? How?"

"With a board, against the side of the barn. It was too funny for anything to see them galloping down the lot."

I wanted to go to the house, but Susie would not, because that would be cheating. I was honest, too, but I could usually see some way of twisting things around so it was easier on me.

When daylight began to sift through the cracks Susie locked the door and slipped back to the house. After a time Pa came down and unlocked the door and asked if I had been wrestling with the flesh. I said yes, but I didn't tell him now much.

Then I told him about the men coming, and how, when they heard a noise, they had been frightened away. I did not tell him who made the noise, but I kind of let him think that I had made it, without actually saying so. When I got to telling him about what had happened I began to see that I had played a pretty important part, and that if the cultivator shovel hadn't fallen down and scared them Susie's board would not have amounted to much. It's pretty easy, when I get to talking about something after it has happened, to see how important I was.

"I guess if I hadn't been here there wouldn't have been any harness left," I said.

When Pa saw the harness pulled down off the pegs and strewn on the floor, with the straps cut, his neck stiffened and hazelnuts stood out on his cheeks.

"They will pay for this dearly," he said, huskily.

BOONE STOP

All the time he was doing the chores he went about with his teeth set and his lips in a straight line, stopping once in a while to look off across to where the railroad men had pitched their camp. Through breakfast Pa said hardly a word, eating with his head down and passing the bread mechanically. We watched him nervously, for we knew what Pa was like when his temper was aroused. Brushing the crumbs from his lap, he arose and started across the field toward the railroad camp.

Hour after hour we sat around, waiting for Pa to come back, but he didn't come. Ma would go up-stairs and look out the window toward the railroad camp, but she could not see the camp. It was too far away. She would wait awhile, and then go back and look again. She knew that she wouldn't see anything, but it was better than doing nothing.

At noon she sent me out to bring him in. "Tell him that dinner is ready," she said, as if it wasn't anything at all. But she stood at the window, watching, till I was out of sight.

But nothing had happened. Pa was sitting on the ground with his back against a post, the Bible on his knees, working on the key to the Scriptures. More and more time he was spending on his key—especially since the Angel had been coming—reading for hours at a time, skipping so many words, substituting a certain number of letters until he had a new meaning.

"Hast thou brought me sustenance, my son?" he asked. When he was absorbed in the Bible he would talk like it.

Putting in the book-mark, Pa was getting up.

BOONE STOP

when two of the railroad men crossed the line and began gathering up the stakes. Carefully Pa put down the Bible and, without a word, made for them. Snatching up a stake, one of the men came at Pa.

"The vengeance of the Lord is swift," said Pa, and turned the blow with his arm. Down the two tumbled, legs threshing the air. Pa's trousers leg was ripped to his knee. His hand fastened around the man's throat, while the man began to scratch and kick harder than ever. But in a moment his blows began to get weaker and then stopped. Jumping up, Pa made for the other man, but the man was running for the division fence. He had had all he wanted. Everybody did when it came to fighting Pa. He seemed to have more strength than just what was his own, especially when he was fighting for the Lord.

When the other man was over the fence Pa came back and, gathering up the first man as if he was a sack of wheat, carried him to the fence and threw him over. The man crumpled up like a straw tick. Turning, Pa walked back and picked up his Bible as if nothing had happened, and started for the house. The man began to work his fingers, and pretty soon he propped himself up and looked around as if he had had a dream and didn't know where he was. Other men from the camp came running up and began talking and waving their arms. But Pa paid no attention. He walked on toward the house, opening the Bible once in a while and learning another verse by heart.

IV

I commit the unforgivable sin.

THE next morning Pa prayed twice as long as usual and read two extra chapters. He could repeat paragraph after paragraph from memory. But I couldn't. I couldn't remember any of them except "Jesus wept." Before he finished he read from Revelations and talked a long while about the world coming to an end, while Ma sat there, never taking her eyes off him.

Then we went to school, and when I opened my desk there was a comb in it. I let on as if I never once thought that it was for my religious hair and held a match to it. I guess they were sorry they put it in. Miss Neff came sniffing up to my desk, and gave me a lecture on how near I had come to setting fire to the school-house and burning up my beloved playmates. When I told her that I hated them she said for me to report to the superintendent after school.

I did, but I didn't cry. He could have killed me and I wouldn't have cried. But Mid would. Just give him a few taps and he would cry.

I was now another one behind Pa. It would be out behind the smoke-house this time.

BOONE STOP

As I was cutting across lots for home I met Madame Ristine and her daughter, exercising the dogs. Her name was Veve, and I didn't like her and I never would. She had a way of coming straight to the point.

"Get kept in?"

"No," I said, pretending not to be interested.

"Get a lickin'?"

"A few taps," I said, and blew on my fingers like a steamboat. I wasn't interested in girls, but I liked to show them what I could do. I always feel that way when I come around them.

"You think you're smart, don't you?"

"If I couldn't do any more than that I wouldn't," I said.

"Le's see what you can do, then."

"I can wiggle my ears."

"Le's see."

I wiggled them.

"Anything else?"

It seemed to me that she took my accomplishments very lightly. "I can turn cart-wheels."

"Anybody can do that," she said, taking the curl out of Roscoe's tail.

"I'd like to see you." That would stump her.

"All right," she said, and, putting her hands on the ground, she turned a couple better than I could.

"Le's see you do this," she said, and, putting her fingers in her mouth, she whistled like a train off in the distance, then as if it was up close.

I never knew before that it could be done, but I wasn't going to let on to her.

BOONE STOP

"That isn't anything," I said.

"Let's see you do it, then."

"I don't want to."

"You can't."

"I can."

"Can't."

"Can."

"Watch this," she said, and wiggled both ears, then one at a time. If you had told me that any one could wiggle just one ear at a time I wouldn't have believed it. But I didn't let on that it was anything.

"Pretty fair," I said, "but I can swim with one hand."

"I can swim without any."

"I'd like to see you."

"I can tie my hands and feet and then lay on my back and swim. Can't I, Mamma?"

"She's clever in the water," said Madame Ristine.

I began to look on Veve with more respect. I had thought that she was just an ordinary girl, but now I began to see that she was a lady.

"Speaking of swimming," said Madame Ristine, "if you'll come down and fill Fino's tank I'll give you a quarter."

A quarter! That was almost as good as acting.

"How long can you hold your breath?" asked Veve while we were walking down to the tent.

"Longer than you can."

"You can't."

"I can."

"Can't."

"Can."

BOONE STOP

"Le's see you. But you got to hold your finger over your nose."

"I'll count. One, two, three—go."

I filled my lungs till they were tight and then clamped my finger over my nose. It was hard work, and pretty soon I began to feel dizzy in the head and began to think what if I could never get my breath back. But Veve didn't seem to mind. She went along with her nose pinched up as if nothing was the matter. So I stumbled and fell.

"I beat," she exclaimed.

"I fell or you wouldn't."

"We'll try again," she said. So I had to pretend that I would have to save my strength for filling the tank.

While I was filling it Fino showed up, looking wabbly and sour.

"How's your atavism?" I asked, trying to be pleasant.

"Don't get fresh," he said, and began cleaning his ear.

When I had finished filling the tank, Madame Ristine gave me a quarter in real money—not in tickets or anything. If you could make a quarter in an evening filling a tank, there must be a lot of money in acting. Burying dead horses at two dollars a head was all right, but there was no traveling to it.

As Veve was passing me she gave my hair a pull. She didn't think very much of me, because I had religious hair. They wore it long in the Bible, Pa said, and that was the way we should wear it now. Whatever was in the Bible was right for

BOONE STOP

Pa, and especially when the end of the world was so near.

"Do the boys ever swear in front of you?" asked Veve, meaning on account of my hair.

I would show her. I would make her respect me. Just because I had long hair was no sign I wasn't a man.

"I swear myself sometimes something awful," I said, spitting straight out. Girls can't do that; it dribbles.

"What's the worst swear word you know?" asked Veve.

"You're a lady and I can't tell you," I said, and tried to change the subject. "I've got a double-barreled squirt-gun."

"I'll bet I know a worse one than you do. It's the one Fino says when we have to change cars early in the morning."

"You're a lady," I reminded her.

"I don't care. Your hair's as long as mine. You go ahead and say yours first."

I hated to do it, but I must make her respect me. Bending over I said it in her ear, "Hell!" Coming by itself that way and not being mad at anybody, it sounded awfully wicked, but it would show her that I was a man. "You can't say anything worse than that without being killed. If you do a bolt of lightning from heaven will strike you dead. Ma said so."

"That's pretty fair," said Veve, "but I know one that's worse—the one Fino uses."

"Don't do it, because you will be killed. One time a man said he wasn't afraid of lightning and

BOONE STOP

laid down on a feather bed because lightning can't hit you on a feather bed, and then he swore because he thought nothing could hurt him. But he hadn't any sooner got it out of his mouth than there was a clap of thunder, and when they got to him he was dead."

"That ain't true," said Veve, in her frank way, "or Fino wouldn't live two hours. You ready to hear mine?"

I wasn't going to let Veve be killed by lightning. "I'll raise up my sore finger-nail and let you see."

Veve raised her shoulders like an actress. "Sore finger-nails ain't any attraction to me. Did you know the man?"

I had to admit that I didn't.

"That's the way with them stories—no one ever knows who the man was. Get ready and I will tell you Fino's. I guess you would have to go a long ways to get a worse one than that, besides it don't look rainy."

I must do something to get her mind off Fino's word. I would do something that she couldn't. Then she would respect me. A lady must respect a man or she won't marry him.

"I can chew tobacco," I said. That was stretching it, but I must get her mind off it quick.

"Real tobacco—not grape-vine?"

"Real tobacco, with horse-shoes on it."

"I don't believe it," she said, in that direct way. Veve never beat around the bush. "Le's see you."

That was a little more than I expected. I didn't think about her wanting a demonstration.

"Some day, maybe. I don't do it every day."

BOONE STOP

"Do it now or I'll think you are crawfishing."

"Some day when I have a plug in my pocket. One day's as good as another."

"Fino, come here," said Veve, and when she told him what she wanted he seemed pleased at the idea.

He was more accommodating than usual, and unwrapped the paper bag and cut off a good-sized piece. Veve smelled it and shivered. I could see that she was beginning to respect me.

"Put it away back and chew it as if it is candy," said Fino, and worked his mouth loud to show me how it was done.

I began to work my mouth up and down, and it got bitterer and bitterer, but I smiled as if I liked it. Fino stood watching me with his hands on his knees, working his mouth harder and harder to show me how it was done.

"You swallow the juice, of course," said Fino.

"Sure," I said. "I always do. That's where the real taste is."

I swallowed it, and pretty soon I began to wish I hadn't, but I didn't let on. I just smiled and pretended that we were all having a good time. I began to feel uneasy in the stomach, but I didn't put my hand on it.

"How does it taste?" asked Veve, and, tearing off a bit, she put it in her mouth and began to spit like a grasshopper.

Fino laughed, but I didn't. I knew how she felt.

I could feel it working and turning over in my stomach, and I began to wish there were other ways of winning a lady's respect without having to chew

BOONE STOP

tobacco. I wished I could go around a lady without trying to show off.

But it made Veve admire me. "You'd be a real man," she said, "if you had your hair cut."

A hair-cut only cost a quarter—and I had the quarter.

I went to the barber shop. Mr. Dobson, the barber, was in. He also handed out real-estate pamphlets that read, "Texas Needs You," and played the mandolin. His shelves were filled with hair-renewer and cures for baldness, but his own head looked like a rheumatism potato.

"What it is you would wish?" he asked, in the polite way he always talked.

"I would wish a hair-cut," I said, just as politely. And while he was cutting my hair I thought of something. I would give Veve a lock of my hair, and she could put it in a locket around her neck, and then I would be sacred to her. When any other man came around she would repulse him.

On the way back to the tent my knees began to wobble and I wished I had a knife to scrape the taste off my tongue. But I hung on.

Veve was taking a sweater off Roscoe. "You look fine," she said. "I never did like sissies."

I began to notice what nice eyes she had, and when you looked at her straight from the front her nose didn't seem so snubbed.

I would give her the lock that she was to keep always. "I have something for you," I said, and reached in my pocket.

But I never gave it to her. I began to feel a queer sensation, and with my hand on my stomach I ran

BOONE STOP

for the back of the tent. Roscoe was in the way, but I paid no attention to him. I did not care who or what was in the way, I had to be by myself.

After it was over I straightened up and thought how much trouble there was in the world. I could not face Veve again. She would no longer respect me.

I started home, but my legs were pretty wobbly and my stomach felt as if I would die early. Every time I got sick I would always think I was going to die. But I never did. The next morning I could always eat as much as ever and I would forget all about dying till something else got the matter with me.

As I was going along I came to a sign painted on the fence. It was fresh, having just been put there. It read:

HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS ALREADY CONDEMNED

I looked for the rest of the advertisement, but it had nothing to do with shoes or furniture.

A little farther on I found another:

PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF DAYS

At the crossroads a still larger sign in the same white paint read:

THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH. MAKE YE READY
FOR THE SON OF MAN

It was the way Pa talked, and then I began to see that Pa himself had put them up to get the people ready for the coming of the end of the world.

BOONE STOP

He was making ready to preach to every living creature.

A sign on the White Cloud bridge read:

ISOM SEED WILL SPEAK AT THE ELKHORN SCHOOL
HOUSE SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON A SUBJECT
OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO EVERY
MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD

Troubles were coming on me thick and fast. My stomach was all upset and the world was coming to an end. Struggling and going ahead and trying to accomplish something didn't seem worth while. It was just one thing on top of another.

There was a light in our house and Pa was just lighting a lantern to go out to look for me. That wasn't any too good a sign.

"Where have you been?" said Ma when I opened the door; but when she saw that my hair had been cut her arm went down like a pump-handle. "Your hair!" she said, and covered her face. "You have gone against the Bible."

Pa turned slowly on me with the wick smoking the chimney, and brought his front teeth together till hazelnuts stood out on his jaw. "My son, that you should do this! To think that you would do this when eternity may close over us any day. You have repudiated me and my teachings. You have disgraced me. If I cannot teach a member of my own family the strait and narrow path how can I hope to bring the world to a true belief? You have been growing more headstrong until now all humility is gone. In a few weeks the world, as we know it, will be no more; grass and flesh will be withered

BOONE STOP

and the moon shall be turned to blood. There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and man shall be weighed in the balance—and under my own roof will be found a desecrater of God's law. By your act you have shown that you no longer believe. When the blinding flash comes and the graves open and the dead arise, the family chain will be found broken. One link will be missing. You shall receive no punishment of the flesh, for that of the spirit and the hereafter will be enough. Let us pray."

In a little circle they knelt. There was no place for me, so I bowed down in the corner by myself. I would do the best I could to get in the family circle. I was glad at first that there was to be no punishment of the flesh, but pretty soon I began to wish there was. It would be pretty hard on me while it lasted, because Pa knew by heart the verse about sparing the rod and spoiling the child, but heaven was something that lasted forever. It didn't just last two or three years, or maybe till the locusts came again, but forever and always.

When Pa finished praying he sat down and began to read the Bible without glancing at me. I looked toward Gran'ma, but she would not let me catch her eye. Nobody would look at me except Mid, and I would just as soon have a calf look at me as him.

When I went up-stairs to bed they were all sitting there together, and after I got to my room I could hear them talking. Once in a while Ma would say something, but most of the talking was done by Pa.

When I came down to breakfast the next morning there was no place for me. On the kitchen table

BOONE STOP

I found a plate and knife and fork. I had turned against Pa and his religion and I was no longer to be recognized as one of them.

It was a lonesome day. Mid and Susie went to school, while I followed along at Pa's heels, hoping that he would speak to me or give me something to do, but he paid no more attention to me than if I was not there. While he was fixing the water-gap I started to pick up the wire-cutters for him, but he did not take them. He waited till I put them down and then picked them up without a word.

Slowly I began to realize what I was. I had denied Pa's religion and was an infidel. Nothing in the world could be worse than an infidel. He was shunned of men on earth and doomed to everlasting suffering in the hereafter. I had heard Pa preach a sermon about unbelievers. He had told how they would be condemned to the lake of everlasting fire when the waves of burning sulphur would come rolling up, covering them from head to foot, with snakes to sink their fangs in their quivering flesh. That was the fate of infidels—and it would be mine. I had denied God.

The more I thought about it the more awful it seemed. There was no pleasure left. Day after day I went around with the weight on my soul. I could talk to no one. No one wanted to talk to an infidel. There was no one to confide in. I would have to think it out by myself. I could not go to Pa. Pa always just seemed like a man who lived at our house. I could not tell him my troubles.

I came and went like a hired man. My place was set in the kitchen, and after supper was over I

BOONE STOP

could go out and lie down on the cellar door and think.

Once there was a house near us where an infidel lived. The house was shunned. The blinds were drawn and some of the panes were gone. The gate had been jerked off the hinges one Hallowe'en night and had never been put back. The man lived alone and said there was no God. When he would go shuffling down the street to the post-office, always looking straight ahead, the people would stop talking till he had passed, and then whisper behind his back. Then one day he didn't come for his mail, and several days passed without any one seeing him. The neighbors went to his door and knocked. There was no answer, and when they broke it open he was lying dead on the floor and his ears had been gnawed off by the rats. They buried him as if he was a horse and no one would live in the house till a strange family came to town.

That was what happened to an infidel.

Ma and Pa and Mid were shunning me, and pretty soon everybody would be. I would begin to shuffle as I walked along the street, and if they didn't find me pretty soon after I was dead the rats would gnaw my ears off.

But I could not tell any one this. You can't talk about such things when you are twelve.

There was no hope of heaven now. I would have to go with Fino.

Since God had turned against me, I would turn against Him. I remembered how a man had cursed God and died. Ma had told me, but it was not the one who had been struck by lightning. He had

BOONE STOP

said that he wasn't afraid to curse God, and when a crowd had come he looked up toward heaven and cursed. Then suddenly he put his hand to his heart and staggered and fell.

It was better to curse God and die on the spot than to wait and wait and then die and have the rats gnaw your ears.

"We will now pray," said Pa, one evening after supper, and, going into the sitting-room where the Bible was, he shut the door in my face. I stayed outside the door and listened to him read a chapter, and when he got down on his knees I got down, too. But while he was praying I thought, "If I am lost what is the good of doing this?" so in the middle of the prayer I got up and walked away. I didn't care if they did hear my shoes squeaking.

That night, lying on the cellar door, I made up my mind. I would not wait till the world came to an end. I would do it now. I went off to have a last look at the farm and to tell things good-by. I tried to go up to the horses in the back pasture and put my arms around them, and cry a little, but I couldn't get up to them, because they thought I wanted to catch them for work. Passing the corn-field, I sat down on the go-devil and looked around for the last time. To cheer me up I tried to think of the good times I had had, but I couldn't think of very many. Mostly it was work and serving the Lord. Pa didn't believe in having a good time—you could have that after you got to heaven.

When I got back they had gone to bed. I walked around to have my last look at the house. I would curse God in the yard so that they would find my

BOONE STOP

body before the rats got to it. It was better that I should die thus than live to bring disgrace on Pa and the rest of them. They would never know how I died and would have a regular funeral with flowers.

I would commit the unforgivable sin and die under Gran'ma's window with my face to the stars. But I would not die just as I was. Slipping in, I got the big wash-pan and filled it with water from the reservoir, and had a bath with soap and washed behind my shoulders. They would not have to feel ashamed of me when the undertaker came. ¶ In getting it all off I upset the water on the linoleum and got down on my hands and knees and wiped it up; I didn't just sweep it out with a broom.

Going outside and feeling kind of shivery after the warm bath, I stopped under Gran'ma's window. The time had come. Raising my eyes to heaven I cursed God, and held my breath for the blow. But nothing happened. I held my breath as long as I could, and then caught another, but I was still living. I could still see and the calves were bawling.

I waited and waited, but I didn't feel dizzy or anything. I put out my feet to see if I could walk, and I could. I wasn't paralyzed.

Going down to the barn, I sat down in the door to think it over. Scooping up a handful of rye, I chewed it till it got as near chewing-gum as it would go, and then went to the windmill and had a drink. If I hadn't died yet, I probably wouldn't die at all, so I went to bed.

I was alive the next morning, as usual, but as I followed Pa around I began to see that I would

BOONE STOP

have to make some reparation. God had spared my life and I should do something to show Him that I was sorry. He had seen fit to let me live, and now I must punish myself to make up for what I had done. Day after day I thought of it, but what could I do? I must make some supreme sacrifice. I must do something that would cause me pain. Just loving Mid wasn't enough.

That night, as I was lying on the cellar door, thinking, after the rest of them had gone to bed, I saw the coals shining through the isinglass in the front part of the cook-stove and I knew what my sacrifice would be. Before I could change my mind I walked in to the stove. Opening my hands, I put them on the glowing stove-lids and held them there. When I lifted my hands patches of skin clung to the lids.

I started for the door, but I didn't get to it. Things began to whirl, and then I stumbled. . . .

When I woke up I was up-stairs and in my own bed, and Gran'ma was sitting beside me, and on the table was a row of bottles and a roll of drug-store cotton wrapped in blue paper. When I tried to lift my hands they were as big as sofa-cushions.

V

People begin to come for miles around to see Pa, and are converted just before meal-time. I decide to go to heaven with Gran'ma and let Mid look out for himself.

GETTING well was slow work. Little by little they took the bandages off my hands, and now and then the doctor would come and let the water out. But no mention was made as to what I had done. Sometimes Pa would put his hand on my forehead and swallow, but he didn't say that he was sorry. He might act sorry and do things for you that he had never done before, but he would not say that he was sorry.

Gran'ma hardly seemed to leave my bedside. She would sit there hour after hour and knew everything that I wanted. I wouldn't have to say that I wanted more grape-juice; I would just think it and she would reach for the glass.

When the doctor took the bandages off my hands they were as white and as soft as an egg without a shell.

While I was sick I made up my mind to reform and love Mid, and I got along pretty fair, but when I began to get well he seemed about the same as ever.

BOONE STOP

People began to come in for miles around to see Pa. He had preached at the school-house and people were excited about his predictions. No one could hear Pa preach or talk about the Lord without feeling his power. Ordinarily he was quiet and didn't have much to say, but when he began to talk about the Bible he rolled out the words as if he was running for office.

They came in buggies and they came in wagons, and some of them would break down and say they were sinners and stay till meal-time. They would have meetings in the parlor and shout out what shall we do to be saved, and Pa would say believe in the Lord, and then they would kill a chicken.

Every time they had a meeting in the parlor Pa would make me come down. He wasn't so strict with Mid. I guess he knew that Mid wasn't going to have as hard a pull as I was. Pa would read from Revelations and explain his key and tell about how the Angel had visited him, and then Ma would play on the organ, and then they would pray. But they never took up a collection. Pa could have had quite a bit if he had passed the box and charged for meals.

One night, when they were having a meeting and singing, a fat woman, whose stomach stuck out where she tied her apron, was converted, and Pa said, "Praise the Lord!" just as she went to sit down. The chair she was going to sit on was a wabby one they had brought from the kitchen, and when she hit it one of the legs twisted and she went down. It was funny to see her reaching out and grabbing at the table-scarf. But it didn't do any good; she

BOONE STOP

went on just the same, and when she got to the floor she had a conch shell and the stereoscopes in her lap. It made me laugh, and Gran'ma kind of smiled, too, but it didn't Pa. He just looked solemn and said:

"In a few days it won't make any difference, for in the next world we won't need chairs."

I asked Gran'ma where we would sit in the next world, but she didn't seem to know. Then I asked her if we would all have to stand up, and she said she guessed so. When I asked her why, since it was going to be so crowded, everybody wanted to go there, she said that it was time for me to go to bed. I thought I would slip out to the kitchen and get a piece of chicken before I went up-stairs, but the chicken was all gone. That was the way—there was nothing in the house to eat any more. It made me wish that Pa would have his revivals in the barn.

Even after I had gone to my room I could hear them praying and singing, and just as I was getting sleepy I heard Pa say, "Praise the Lord!" but I didn't hear anybody fall.

Lying up there all alone and nothing to think about but heaven, I began to get enthusiastic about it. I hadn't been interested in it before. I was more interested in figuring out the best way to fight somebody bigger and in keeping Mid from getting everything to eat, but now I saw that it was going to be quite a thing. Especially if the streets were paved with gold.

Veve and Gran'ma would be there. That would make it better than going to the other place with Mid and the railroad men.

Then as soon as I was happy I began to worry.

BOONE STOP

That is the way with me—I never seem to be able to be happy very long at a time. As soon as I get happy I begin to worry about something. What if I shouldn't get to heaven? I wasn't sure; the way I had been acting lately I might be turned away. The more I thought about it then the surer I was I would have to go to the other place.

Finally I went to sleep. I don't know how long I had been asleep when I knew that something was wrong. I woke up, but not as I usually do. I was asleep, and then all of a sudden I was awake, without rubbing my eyes and stretching or anything. I was awake, and there was Pa standing by the side of my bed, with his Sunday clothes on and a lamp in his hand.

"Arise, my son, arise," he said, as if he was leading in prayer. "Arise and don thy raiment."

Setting the lamp on the commode he went downstairs and into the parlor.

I put on my Sunday suit, as it was all the raiment I had, and, turning the lamp down, hurried downstairs as fast as I could. Pa and Ma and Gran'ma and all the rest of them were there, and Gran'ma had on her black dress with her gold breastpin. Mid had his face washed and a handkerchief in his pocket, as if he was going somewhere. Pa sat stiff and straight, with his hands folded in front of his breast like he had when the lightning had killed Nova Gooch under the cottonwood, waiting for the spirit of the Lord to move him to speech. I wished that the Lord would be more prompt; I could have slept longer if I had known it.

I tried to feel religious and to think about who

BOONE STOP

would be in heaven, but I couldn't. I never seem to be able to keep my mind on things I should. The first thing I know it's off wondering about something that has nothing to do with what I ought to be thinking about. I tried to feel sorrowful, but the first thing I knew I was thinking about what would happen if somebody soaked Fino's atavism bananas in Pain-Killer.

Suddenly Pa stood up and raised his hands as if he was going to sell something.

"I have a great and wonderful message to impart to you," he said, slowly. "This night the Angel came to me again and delivered itself of a message."

That was just my luck. Just as certain as an angel came I was sure to be asleep; when an automobile passed I was always in the far meadow. Did the angel have a ladder or wings? I would ask Gran'ma—she was a light sleeper.

"I was in the midst of a sound sleep, when suddenly the Angel stood beside me. It was so radiant that it blinded my eyes, and while it was standing there it delivered this message to me: It said that I had been chosen by the Lord to warn mankind that the Day of Judgment was at hand and to do all in my power to bring sinners to repentance before the final hour when flesh shall be no more. Then the Angel wrote this sentence in the air with a finger of living fire, 'The Bridegroom Cometh October 22d,' and disappeared in a blinding flash. Three weeks from to-day the things of the earth shall be no more. Then heaven shall open and take us in. It is wonderful to be chosen from on high to carry such a

BOONE STOP

message to the world. It thrills me and fills me with a strength that is not my own."

Pa's eyes flashed and there was a strength in him that I had never seen before. Ma was so excited that she didn't pay any attention to her best clothes. Something quivered in the room as if somebody was there besides us.

"Let us pray," said Pa, and got down on his knees as slowly as if he was the presiding elder. It was a long prayer, and once in a while Ma would say hallelujah. But Pa didn't stop; he went right on praying for China and Africa and Siberia and countries where they wouldn't hear what was coming until it was too late.

When I went to bed I left Pa reading the Bible, and when I came down to breakfast he was still sitting there with the Bible on his knees. After breakfast we found that the railroad men had torn down the fence and let the cows into the corn. One of them died, but Pa didn't say anything. He simply looked off toward the railroad camp and whispered, "They know not what they do," and did not even tell Ma.

All day Pa sat around reading, putting the bookmark between the pages when Ma called him to dinner and going back to his chair as soon as the meal was over. Before the Angel came Pa worked in the fields all day and read only at night, but now he read and worked at his key all day long.

I began to get more and more interested in heaven and decided to do all I could to get there, and began carrying in Mid's cobs and kindling. Mid looked surprised, but as long as he could get out of

BOONE STOP

work he didn't worry about any explanation. He took it for granted that he was going to get there, but I had my doubts. I wanted to go to heaven because Gran'ma and Susie would be there. But I wouldn't ever get to be an angel. If I got in at all I would be thankful.

"Gran'ma," I said, "are you and Susie going to be angels?"

"Yes, Clevie."

"Will you associate with me?"

"Of course."

"You won't go off and leave me alone with Mid?"

"Don't you understand—everybody in heaven will be angels."

"Will I?"

"Yes, Clevie. One of the best there."

I saw through that; she was just telling me that to comfort me. It would be a close shave if I got in at all.

I went to the school-house one night to hear Pa preach, and cried in plain sight of everybody. But I didn't care very much, because a lot of other people were crying, too. Pa was a different man, standing up behind the teacher's table with the chalk-boxes and the globe on it, his hair flowing down his back and his long beard covering his brown vest. When he first began to talk a few of the people scoffed and tittered, but before he got through they were looking mighty thoughtful. It seemed strange to see those wrinkled, brown faces of people who had never given away to anything before, sniffing and wiping their noses on the backs of their hands and saying what shall we do to be saved.

BOONE STOP

"Let's pray," said Pa, and everybody got down on their knees except three railroad men in the back of the house. While Pa was praying, one of them began to drum on the desk with his fingers. When Pa finished he gave the man a straight look, but the man paid no attention. Going back, Pa put his big red hand on the man's shoulder.

"This is the house of the Lord," said Pa, "for are we not told that when two or three gather together in His name that He is in the midst of them?"

Walking back to the table, Pa began again, telling of the coming of the end of the world and what one must do to be saved, when the man hammered on the desk and said:

"Can I ask a question?"

"I should be very pleased to answer it," said Pa.

"What I want to know is, what is going to become of this world?"

"The earth, as we term it, will be returned to its original purity as before the fall. Then instead of the thorn shall be the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, the myrtle."

I thought it was a good answer, and it impressed the rest of the people, but I guess it didn't the railroad man, for he turned around and looked at the two with him and winked and said:

"What 'll you bet it comes to an end on the twenty-second?"

"I'm afraid that I have heard the brother wrongly," said Pa. "God's will is so revealed that it takes many questions and many answers to understand it. Will he repeat the question?"

"I say, if you got such an inside tip, what 'll

BOONE STOP

you bet this world goes to smash on the twenty-second?"

One of the men laughed, but when Pa started walking slowly down the aisle toward them they began to look more serious.

"Dost thou not know that thou art defaming the house of God?"

"It looks to me like this was a school-house. I thought that was what a school-house was for—to ask questions and learn things."

"But we are gathered here in His name and I shall have to ask you to be quiet and respectful or to leave."

Pa was starting back with the deliberate step he used when carrying the Lord's message, when the man put out his foot and tried to trip him. Out shot Pa's hand and closed around the man's throat, while the other two cramped in their seats tried to pull Pa's hand loose. But they couldn't do it. When Pa got a grip on anything he was worse than a bulldog. Jerking the man from his seat, he carried him down the aisle to the door, as if he was a sack of seed corn, and threw him out on the porch. It sounded like a ham falling down in the smoke-house. Turning, Pa walked back to the other two men, but they made no effort to get up. Taking his place behind the table, Pa closed his eyes and said:

"I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Then he went on with the sermon as if nothing had happened.

As he walked home after the sermon a great crowd

BOONE STOP

followed him, questioning him, and that evening a lot more people came and stood in the yard, while Pa hung a lantern on the porch and preached to them. No longer could all the people get in the parlor, and each day his believers were growing.

But it wasn't very much fun. The men did not get off to one side and tell stories the way they did at a sale. None of the railroad men came and there were no fights. If there had been Pa would have got the best of them, because he had a strength that was not his own.

VI

I drink another bottle of grape-juice and go out for the world to come to an end. But it doesn't, and I go back and feed the pigs.

EVERY day more and more people came to our house and most of them took fried chicken. They began to call themselves the Holy-Seeders and to stop people on the road and pray for them. Some of the people didn't like it, but finally they would give in and come to the house to meet Pa and stay till meal-time. They would hitch their horses to the pickets and the next day I would have to nail them on again. Mid wouldn't turn his hand. All he did was to sit around and go to the table every time a new crowd came in.

"Come in and partake of bread with us, brother," Pa would say, but most of them made it chicken.

It was pretty hard on Gran'ma, because Ma stayed in the parlor and talked to the people who had been saved. Sometimes I would help Gran'ma with the dishes, but Mid didn't. He would sit in a rocking-chair and say that he was sorry for his sins.

At night, after everybody else had gone to bed, Ma and Gran'ma would sit up and work on our ascension robes. They were long and white, but

BOONE STOP

they didn't have sleeves like a nightdress. I saw that Pa was going to look funny in his, because he wasn't used to wearing skirts. He always slept in his underclothes.

One day Pa went down to the road and tacked up a sign. After he had gone I went down to see what it was. It said:

EVERYTHING TO BE SOLD OR GIVEN AWAY BEFORE
OCTOBER 22D. ON THAT DAY THE BRIDE-
GROOM COMETH. COME AND GET
WHAT YOU WANT, BROTHER

With that the people began to come in more than ever. Sometimes they would pay Pa something, and sometimes they wouldn't. It never made any difference to him. When they would drive off a cow and hand him some money he wouldn't look at it; he would just slip it in his pocket and go on talking about the glory of the Lord. But they didn't when I was there. If I didn't get a good price I wouldn't let anything go. They couldn't begin to talk to me about the glory of the Lord and expect to get a set of harness for nothing. And they had to pay me cash. They couldn't just run their hands in their pockets and say they had forgotten their purse and that they would see me some other day. If they didn't have the money, they didn't get it.

People began coming in on the train and walking around and looking at things and carrying off curios as if there had been an accident, and reporters would follow Pa around with their note-books and ask foolish questions.

The nearer the day came the more excited I got.

BOONE STOP

Sometimes I would think that I would make it all right, and pretty soon I would be worrying about it. But I took their money, just the same. I would give it to Pa and he would put it in his pocket without looking at it. I could have kept a lot of it and he wouldn't have known it.

One night I heard a noise and woke up, and thought maybe Pa had miscalculated, but it turned out that it was only a bird flying against my window.

The night before the 22d the house was crowded. Most of the night they sat up praying and singing, and once in a while going out to the kitchen and getting something to eat. They had better appetites than you would think people going to heaven would have.

"Open up the best we have," said Pa. "We will no longer need it."

With that they went to the cellar and brought up the canned goods. They thought they were getting everything, but they were not. I had got there ahead of them. I had hid the grape-juice.

They would listen to Pa preach awhile, and then they would get up on their toes and slip out to the kitchen and open another jar of watermelon preserves. But Pa didn't eat anything. He would preach for hours and then come to the table, take a few bites, and begin talking about the Lord. I was interested in the Lord, too, but I got hungry, just the same. I would eat bread and meat and potatoes and apple-sauce and things that way till the rest of them were through, then I would slip out and open another bottle of grape-juice. I did not want to go to heaven on an empty stomach.

BOONE STOP

There were a good many things about it that were hard to understand.

"Gran'ma," I asked, "whereabouts is it going to come to an end?"

"Everywhere, my child."

"In China and in Kansas City, just the same as here?"

"I guess so, Clevie."

"I'd think it would start somewhere and end somewhere."

"No, it will be all over in the twinkling of an eye."

I could see that it was going to be a wonderful event. It was inspiring to think about. One minute you would be in Missouri with your stomach full of grape-juice and the next you would be in heaven. There wasn't any traveling or anything. Snap! and you would be there. A circus wouldn't be anything.

"The graves will open and the dead will arise," said Gran'ma.

I knew that a lot of them were going to find things changed. Especially since we had worked the roads.

I would be interested, when I got to heaven, to see who was there. There would be a lot of disappointed people. I knew who some of them would be, but I would let them find out for themselves. Mid had had plenty of time to change his mind if he had wanted to.

We were pretty crowded in the house that night. I had to give up my bed to the woman with the large stomach, and sleep on the couch in the sitting-room. It was pretty hard to sleep on the couch, because the

BOONE STOP

horsehair was slick and once in a while I would slide off on the floor and somebody, going out to the kitchen to get a few more bites to eat before the world came to an end, would step on me. Some of the men slept on the floor and some of them slept on the porch wrapped up in quilts and horse-blankets, but they could eat about the same.

There wasn't much to eat for breakfast. We couldn't have stood it much longer. If it had been on the 28th a lot of us would have had to go hungry. I was glad that I had saved the grape-juice, and when Veve came out I gave her some. She was a good drinker, but she couldn't drink as much as I could. Let me go all night without anything to eat and I can hold a lot.

"Let us assemble for prayers," said Pa, after breakfast, and everybody went in the parlor and knelt down. But it was pretty hard for me to get down, on account of the grape-juice. Veve could get down farther than I could. I was glad of it because I wanted to make her feel as good as I could on the last day.

It was the longest prayer I had ever heard Pa pray. I began to wish that I hadn't drunk so much grape-juice. He began with the world and then took up the nations one by one, and finally worked on down to the President of the United States. I hadn't thought before about there being any doubt about the President of the United States, but pretty soon I saw that I wasn't the only one who was going to have a hard pull. When we got there the President would be the first person I would look for. I didn't know much about politics, but we could talk

BOONE STOP

about crops. I would talk with him till somebody else came up, and then I would shake hands with the Cabinet and pass on.

"We will now take ourselves to the hilltop that I saw in my dreams," said Pa, "and there await the coming of the Lord."

While the rest of them were putting on their robes and getting ready I slipped out and had some more grape-juice. If we had not gone till afternoon it would have been all right with me; the grape-juice would have lasted.

Everything in the house was torn up and lonesome, and a good many cookies had been trampled into the carpet, but there was nothing on the table but scraps. We went out into the yard with our ascension robes on, leaving the doors open and not paying any attention to whether flies got in or not.

"This way, O ye chosen of the Lord," said Pa, and started through the orchard to the hill on the east eighty.

A good many rigs followed us, but Pa didn't pay any attention to whether they left the gate open or not. There were not many hogs or cattle left, anyway. Pa walked ahead like John the Baptist, and when he came to a fence he knocked the wires down and went on without caring what was in the pasture. Wagons and teams came following behind, and reporters with cameras would run ahead of Pa and as we came up they would snap their cameras. But Pa paid no attention to them; he kept his eyes fixed on the heavens.

The railroad men, leaning over the fence, began to laugh and talk about the holy nuts. Straight up to

BOONE STOP

them Pa walked, but I saw that he wasn't going to fight, because there were no hazelnuts on his jaws. You could always tell when Pa was going to fight by that.

"This is for you," he said, and gave them a bag with the money in that the people had given us. "One cannot take such to the kingdom of heaven. If it gives you a passing pleasure, it is yours, and welcome."

The men took it awkwardly, as if it was a baby without many clothes on, and looked at one another. Then they quit saying things about us and dropped in as the last of the procession came along.

I caught up with Veve and walked along beside her. Now that the end of the world was so near, surely she would not be so indifferent.

"Veve," I said, "I am glad to be going to heaven with you."

"It's a popular place," said Veve, looking about.

That was the girl of her; she had to keep me in hot water on the last day of the world. Even when she knew that in a few hours we would be in heaven she had to keep me guessing.

"I wouldn't like to go to heaven without you," I said, and looked at her steady.

"I'd like to see who was there," she said.

As we began climbing the hills believers began coming in from all sides. Some of them hadn't been believers till the last minute, then they had put on their best clothes and came out so as not to run any risk.

"Let's keep close together," I said, and tried to take hold of Veve's hand, but she wouldn't let me.

BOONE STOP

"I'd rather be seen coming into heaven with you than with anybody else in the world."

"It wouldn't do you much good. I'm not very well known there."

"I don't care very much if I don't go there," I said, "the way you are acting. Maybe I'll decide to go to the other place."

"Very well. You can see Ingersoll, anyway."

On the top of the hill we gathered around Pa. Mr. Greensfelder had closed up his grocery and had on his best suit, but he had a boy selling sandwiches. Whatever happened, Mr. Greensfelder was going to come out ahead.

When we had started the sky was clear, but now it began to cloud up. Big clouds went drifting across the sky, with little ones sweeping by like hawks after a chicken. Two women came panting up the hill, suddenly turned believers. Pa seemed sorry that they had waited till the last moment to believe, but I was glad of it. They looked like big chicken-eaters.

It began to rain, one big drop after another breaking to pieces on the grass-blades. With that the people began to move and wiggle like mice under cornsilk. They began shaking out their storm robes and putting up their buggy-tops and looking toward town. But Pa paid no attention to them nor to the rain. He stood with his hands clasped in front of him, turning his eyes around to find where the heavens were going to open.

"Let us pray," said Pa, and we all got down on our knees. Every moment I expected the sky to open and there would be heaven with its streets of

BOONE STOP

gold and an ivory water-tower, but it didn't. Nothing happened. Pa began to pray. He began with all the people who had ever lived and with all those who had died, and I saw that it was going to take him a long time to work down to the President of the United States. Pa didn't pay any attention to the rain, but I did. I wished we had gone to the haybarn. It would have been just as easy for the Lord to find us there as anywhere.

Suddenly there was a crash of lightning and Pa jumped up and looked around. But heaven wasn't in sight. All we could see were some steers and a boy coming out to sell umbrellas. Pa did not go on with his prayer. He stood up and kept looking around as if he would never give up. But the others did. Slowly, one by one, they began walking back to the road and getting in their buggies and driving off toward town, while Ma stood at Pa's side with her head bowed. She would not give up, either. But Gran'ma did not seem so sure. She looked toward the house pretty often.

At last the two women, the latest converts, said that they believed the Lord could find them anywhere, and went home to dry off so that they could go to heaven in peace. One by one the believers slipped away and I began to wish that Pa would take a chance on the Lord finding us in the kitchen. While I was looking toward the house and wondering if there was anything left to eat, Pa turned and caught me. But I didn't turn my head away from the house; I just raised my eyes a little higher and pretended that I was looking for the place where the sky was to open. I don't know whether I fooled him

BOONE STOP

or not. Sometimes he could see through things awfully easy, and other times he couldn't. Gran'ma was better at seeing through things than Pa was, but she made allowance. Pa never made any allowance for anything. I caught Gran'ma looking toward the house and kind of gathering up her robe as if she was going to cross a puddle, but Pa didn't notice. Then Gran'ma put a fascinator over Susie, but Pa paid no attention, and stood another hour with his arms folded, looking for the chariot. Gran'ma began to crumple her skirts faster and faster, her lips saying the words over to find how they would sound before she spoke.

"Isom," she said, "I think I had better go to the house and get something to warm Susie up."

She waited to see what Pa would say, but he didn't say anything; he didn't give in. He swallowed hard as if he was downing the last hope, and slowly turned toward the house, but ahead of Gran'ma. He must lead, or not at all.

The chickens had come out through the open gate and were wandering around over the yard and over the porch, not knowing what to think of it. Around and around they walked, clucking to themselves, their necks stretching out and coming back, and turning their heads from side to side to make sure that it wasn't some kind of a trap that would suddenly close on them. The pigs were in the shelled-corn bin, but Pa paid no attention. He walked into the parlor without wiping his feet and took up the Bible. Hour after hour he sat reading, paying no attention to the bellowing of the calves.

"Isom," said Ma, coming to the door, "here are

BOONE STOP

some dry clothes." But he did not hear. Page after page he turned, with the paper scraping on his rough fingers, while we crept around as if somebody was dead, all waiting to see what the spirit of the Lord would tell Pa to do.

The windmill had made the tank overflow and the pigs were enjoying the water, but I did not try to burn them, or anything. It wasn't any fun for me to crack them with a blacksnake any more. The world was too serious, with everything depending on what Pa would do. No advice would he ask of anybody, or consult with Ma; the Lord would tell him what to do.

On the barn floor was a table-salt sack, with a note on it, written in pencil. I read it and it said:

We are sorry. You are all right.

It was not signed, but I knew that it was from the railroad men. In it was the money that Pa had given them.

It made my stomach draw in to see so much money. What should I do with it? I spread the money out in piles on an end gate, the bills by themselves, the silver by itself, and the gold by itself. I tried to take my mind off it, but I couldn't. I put it on top of the cross-beam where we kept the oil-can, and started the corn-sheller going, but I stopped it. It made too much noise. I could do anything with the money I wanted to; nobody would ever know anything about it. I put some of the money in my pocket to see how heavy it was, and it was mighty heavy bumping against my legs. A millionaire

BOONE STOP

could never carry all his money; he would have to leave some of it at home or hire a man.

"If you took it no one would ever know," something in me said. I didn't know there was anything in me that would talk that way, but there was. "Then the other boys wouldn't have any more money than you have."

I carried a bucket of shorts down to the fattening hogs and when I got back the money seemed more mine than ever.

"Cleve! Cleve!" I heard a voice calling. It was Ma. That brought me to myself, and straight to the house I took the money. I had done the right thing, but I had almost done the other.

I took the sack to Pa, but he did not lift his eyes. He just kept on reading.

"There's money in it. The railroad men left it."

He did not take his eyes from the book, not even when I told him there was money in it. You would think that he would have wanted to know how much, but he didn't.

Supper was ready; the chairs were all in their places and the coffee-pot was on the table. We looked toward one another and then toward Pa in the parlor, reading. But no one wanted to call him. Ma turned to me, but I dropped my eyes; then she turned to Susie and, stiffening, Susie marched up to him as if she was going to put her hand on him, but she didn't. No one ever did. Susie drew herself up as if she was going to speak a piece:

"Supper is ready."

He did not lift his head. "Proceed without me."

We took our places at the table. Always was Pa

BOONE STOP

there to thank the Lord for what we were about to receive and to sanctify it to His name, but now Pa's chair was vacant. Then Ma bent her head and said the same thing Pa always said, in the same squeaky voice, with a good deal of phlegm in her throat.

Neighbors began to drive up while I was out finishing up the grape-juice, but Ma met them in the lot and talked to them in whispers. Glancing at the parlor where Pa sat under the light, they silently shook their lines and clucked to their horses instead of calling out in a loud voice, and drove away into the night.

I wanted to see what Pa was doing and, tiptoeing up, looked through the window. It made me dry in the mouth, as if I was watching something I shouldn't, like a lady going to bed. Pa was down on his knees, praying, and when I went in Ma held her finger over her lips.

"Your Pa is receiving the message," she said.

We waited in the sitting-room, Ma and Gran'ma sitting up straight as if they were visiting. Mid set a chair rocking with his toe, and was making it go faster and faster till Ma put her hand on it and gave him a look.

There was a creaking and a moving inside, and Pa appeared in the door. He looked over us without saying anything, like a preacher waiting for everybody to get seated. "The Lord, ever gracious, ever sustaining, has delivered His message to me, as He does to all those who have faith. Sometimes it may be slow in coming, but to those who believe it always comes. It has come to me and now our course is open. Mother, will you bring the atlas?"

BOONE STOP

Quickly she arose, and from the parlor brought the coupon atlas. We had got it by saving five hundred coupons, but it wasn't as much as I expected. There was no reading—just maps and longitude and latitude and pyramids showing how much wool Australia raised.

"Open it to the map of the state," said Pa.

Ma began turning through it, backward and forward, faster and faster, glancing up to see if Pa was getting impatient. But he wasn't. If he had been waiting with the team to go to town he would have been, but waiting on the Lord he never was.

Then she found the alphabetical index and turned to our state.

"The Lord will indicate where our lot shall be cast," said Pa, and closed his eyes. Walking up, he reached out a long finger, with one side of the nail mashed where he had got it caught in a mowing-machine cog when the horses started up too quickly. Back and forth over the page he moved it, as if he was witching for water, and then put it down.

"Wilt thou read what the Lord has directed?"

Putting her finger against his, Ma edged hers over as he drew his away till it covered the same spot. Putting on her glasses, she bent over and moved her lips till she was sure she had it right, then said, "It is Boone Stop."

"So be the will of the Lord," said Pa, and opened his eyes.

As soon as we could get a freight-car we put what things we had in it and, leaving the door of the house open for any one who wished to claim it, we left Rutherford forever.

VII

*Our church has a strawberry festival, but I don't care.
I go to the pool-hall. I walk home with a girl and
Mr. Chambers snaps his fingers and says, "By
gicks!"*

WHEN we left Rutherford Gran'ma was the one who rose to the occasion. She bought the tickets and saw that the things were put in the freight-car and gave orders to Pa as if he was a hired man. On the train Pa sat with Susie in his lap, looking straight ahead, breathing deep as if there was a weight on his soul, and once in a while covering his eyes with his hands and saying:

"It is the will of the Lord. I must not complain. It may be that He has given me this to test my belief. He shall not find me wanting."

When we arrived at Boone Stop, Pa got down on his knees to ask for guidance, and then went out to look for a job. When Speed Mosby hired him to work in the mine Pa shook his hand and said:

"Praise the Lord!"

Boone Stop wasn't very much like Rutherford, because there was nothing in Boone Stop but zinc-mines. Pa didn't know anything about zinc-mining, but he was willing to work. . . . But that

BOONE STOP

was six years ago and now it seemed that we had always lived there.

At first Boone Stop didn't seem much like the name of a town, but pretty soon I got used to it and thought that it was all right. It was called that because Daniel Boone had once stopped there. It was a nice, big town and had a lot of fine pool-halls. The best one was Red Milligan's. That was the one I went to.

Pa was still tall and straight, and when he shut his lips they made a straight line. There was more white in his beard and he had cut his hair, but that was about all. When he walked it was with the same swing as when he had fought the railroad men, but the limp in his rheumatism foot showed more because working in the ground wasn't good for it.

Ma looked older. There were more lines in her face, and when she was baking she didn't stand up any more. She had a chair with the back off which she could slip under the kitchen table, but sometimes she would get so interested in her work that she would forget all about the chair and bend over the stove till she got through, and then the next day she would have to stay in bed.

Gran'ma was just about the same. Old people don't seem to change much. But now she had to walk with a cane. One day I tacked a piece of hose on the bottom so that she wouldn't slip, and she smoothed back my hair and thought it was wonderful. At first it didn't seem anything to me, but pretty soon I began to see that it was. When anybody praises me or says I am smart or anything, it doesn't take me long to think so, too.

BOONE STOP

Susie was getting prettier and prettier all the time. She was the best-looking one in our family. I looked more like her than any of them.

Mid was tall and gawky and wore glasses. That's all there was to him.

One evening we sat down to supper, and Pa thanked the Lord for what we were about to receive, as usual. But we were not going to receive very much, because there wasn't very much on the table. That night there was to be a strawberry festival at our church and there wasn't any use in having very much to eat when we could serve the Lord by filling up on strawberries.

We never talked much when we ate; about the only sound was the rattle of the knives and forks. I liked to go places where they laughed and talked and had a good time at meals, but with Pa eating was serious work. To him this world was a serious place—a preparation for the one to come—and you shouldn't go through it laughing and joking. After you got to heaven you could have a good time, but you mustn't be giddy here.

I bent my head when Pa started to thank the Lord, and he thought I was thinking about what he was saying, but I wasn't. I was thinking about myself. I thought a good deal about myself, and especially since I was growing up to be a man and was getting to be so smart. I was thinking about myself and Cleo. I thought about these two things more than anything else, and especially since Pa had come out and said what he had. He had called her the daughter of the devil. He had called her that because her father said there was no hell and didn't go to church.

BOONE STOP

"Do you know that that Chambers girl never goes to church?" he had asked.

"Yes," I said, "I know it." He looked at me as if he expected that to settle it, but I said, "Lots of people don't go to church."

I wouldn't have dared to say that at Rutherford, but I was getting bigger now. If I had said it then he would have taken me out behind the smoke-house, but he couldn't lick me now. I was too big.

"Yes," he said, "and lots of people won't go to heaven, either."

I never thought of Cleo as going to heaven or not going to heaven. I just thought of her as Cleo. She was the daughter of R. G. Chambers.

R. G. Chambers was the smartest lawyer in Boone Stop. When he pulled his lock of hair down over his eyes and put one elbow in the palm of his hand and dropped his finger in the faces of the jury, it was pretty certain they would see things the way he wanted them to. But R. G. Chambers was an atheist; he never went to church and had a picture of Ingersoll hanging in his office. With his feet on the edge of his office table he would tilt back in his chair, with his hands locked behind his head, and argue religion for hours and never get mad. He could quote the Bible better than most preachers, but he never went to church to learn about it. Sometimes they would come up to his office to convince him, and he would tilt back in his chair and lop one knee over the other and enjoy it; but they wouldn't. Pretty soon they would storm out and say that when they wanted a lawyer they would get

BOONE STOP

a God-fearing one, but they never did. If they wanted to win they would come to him, and when anybody killed anybody else they would get to Mr. Chambers just as fast as they could.

One day Pa had gone down to Mr. Chambers's office, with his Testament under his arm and his lips saying over the words he wanted to use. When he came back his coat was unbuttoned and his cheekbones were red. He had forgotten his Testament, but he didn't go back after it. He kept walking straight ahead and talking to himself and stepping as if he was going up-stairs. Going into the parlor, he opened his big leather Bible and began looking up something. He must have found it, because he kept clearing his throat and said that he didn't want any supper.

After that he never had any use for Mr. Chambers and didn't want me to have anything to do with Cleo. "She's a daughter of the devil," he had said and turned and walked off.

But he liked Susie's friend. His name was Ozy Getchell and he was the son of Deacon Getchell and Deacon Getchell could quote almost as many chapters as Pa himself could. Ozy could quote a good many himself because he always went to Sunday-school when he was at home. Ozy had his clothes made in Kansas City, and after he had been down there getting measured he would come home and sleep for two or three days. Every winter he went away to a business college and studied shorthand and commercial economics, and when he came home in the spring he would keep a lock-box at the post-office. He would read his mail leaning against the

BOONE STOP

wall desk and then tear up the envelope before dropping it in the wire basket. When he came home from college, as he always called it, his father would want him to get a job in the mines, and Ozy would get one and start in and work hard for two or three weeks, when he would find that he was getting behind in his shorthand and have to stop to practise up. Pa liked him because when he was off at college he went to church regularly. That was the real test of a young man. Some of them would go to church when they were at home and knew that everybody was judging them by it, but it was different if they went when they were off in a strange town with nobody to see them. When he came to our house he would sit out on the porch and talk about the Bible with Pa, and there wasn't another boy in town who would do that. When Susie would come downstairs Pa would get up and excuse himself and go in to read and leave them by themselves.

I had wanted to tell Pa, when he turned and walked off, that he didn't understand, but I knew better than that. No one ever told Pa that he didn't understand. I wanted to rush up to him and say: "You don't know what you are talking about. I guess I know Cleo better than you do." But I didn't. Instead I stood looking after him and saying things under my breath. But I made up my mind to one thing—if I could not take Cleo to the strawberry festival I would not go myself. That would show him. Staying away from something that was to help the church was almost as bad as not going to church. But I didn't care. Pa couldn't boss me all his life. He might back in Rutherford, but now

BOONE STOP

it was different. I would go to church or not, just as I pleased.

While we were sitting at the table, eating, I thought out how I would do it. After the meal was over I would get up and stretch and say, "I don't believe I'll go this evening."

Then Ma would look up and say, in a surprised tone, "Why, Cleveland, this is the night of the strawberry festival."

"I know it, but I don't feel like going." I'd either say that or, "I know that, but I don't believe I feel like going." That wouldn't make it so positive. But if they insisted I would come out positive.

"But you must come to that," she would say.

Then I would yawn and say in a bit firmer tone, "No, I don't care to go, thank you."

Then Pa would look up and say: "Cleveland, you will do as your mother says. This is the Lord's cause."

If I could only say, "I don't care whose cause it is, I am not going," that would settle things. But that was too strong. It wasn't safe to talk about the Lord that way to Pa. I would have to say something milder. "I am not going and you cannot make me." Then I would turn and walk out, and if he followed me into the yard and said anything then that was his lookout. Slowly Pa's eyes would come down, when he saw that I meant it, and then he would turn and walk off.

But now that the meal was almost over and the time was getting closer and closer, I was not so sure that his eyes would go down and that he would turn and walk off. Pa was not given to turning and walk-

BOONE STOP

ing off. But, now that the time had come, I must go through with it. If I didn't everything was lost. Now that the minute was here I wished that I had given in just a little—not enough to lose my point—but still enough to keep things from coming to a crisis. I could take the step some other time.

The moment had come. I found myself standing up just as I had planned. Going to the window I stretched and kind of yawned. "I'm going through with it," I kept telling myself. "I knew I would. When I make up my mind to do a thing it is just the same as done."

"I believe—" I began aloud.

At the sound of my voice they all turned to face me.

"Don't you want some pie, Clevie?" asked Gran'ma.

I shook my head. I could not stop to reply to her. "I believe," I said in a louder tone, "I believe—that I will go down-town."

I hadn't meant to say that. It was harder to face Pa than I thought. When I was off by myself it didn't seem so hard, but when the time came I couldn't do it. But what I had said was all right—it was a pretty good turn to think of on the spur of the moment. I would go down to the Square and not come back till after the festival was over; that would be easier. Then let him say what he wanted to. I would talk back to him then. I would fling it back in his face about the daughter of the devil.

"Was there anything special that you wanted to go for?" asked Ma.

"No, nothing special. Just a little walk."

BOONE STOP

"Very well, Cleveland," said Pa. "We will meet you at the church."

"No, you won't," I said, but I didn't say it till I was out in the yard, and not very loud then. Even if he didn't hear it he would soon find out. Let him say what he would the next morning. I would defy him then. I would look straight into his eyes and then he would know who he was talking to.

I would play pool. I would play pool instead of walking around or loafing in the candy-kitchen, and in the morning when he wanted to know what I had been doing I would tell him. Then let him say what he wanted to. I would be ready.

The hall was full of miners, and mighty fine shots some of them were, too. Some of the men who were the best hoisters at the mines and the best tub-hookers and the best drillers were the poorest players. But they didn't stand very high with the other men. They might be able to earn more in the mines, but that didn't count here. Even if a man was only a shoveler he was as good as a gang boss here if he could make a good shot. It all depended on the man. It didn't take me long to see that. It didn't make any difference how high up in the mine a man was, if a man wasn't a good pool-shot Red Milligan didn't have any use for him. If you wanted to be anybody you had to be a good pool-shot, that was all.

Red Milligan was a fine player and would have been a champion if it hadn't been for his wife, who was a burden to him, and especially so since she wouldn't take in washing any more. Red was

BOONE STOP

mighty friendly, and said that if I would come in some afternoon, when things weren't so rushed, he would show me some trick shots that would be a lot of value to me if I got to playing for money.

As I was going out I almost bumped into Mr. Chambers and Cleo going down the street. I stopped, wondering whether to duck back or to hurry on ahead; maybe they hadn't recognized me. If they had and if they spoke to me I would tell them I had come there to see somebody. Charley Colden, who drove an express wagon, could be found there almost any time. I would tell them I had come down to leave an order for him. Then they wouldn't know that I went to pool-halls.

Mr. Chambers did recognize me. "Good evening, Cleveland," he said. "Going our way?"

"I'll just walk along with him a piece," I said to myself, "and then I'll mention casually why I was in there." Then he and Cleo wouldn't lose respect for me.

"Yes," I said, "I am."

I mustn't begin too soon on my explanation; I must wait long enough for it to come in casually. "Nice evening," I said, and then I said that I thought it would be nice to-morrow, and that was all I could think of. I could never find much to talk about in the weather. If it wasn't raining or storming there wasn't anything to say. "I was just in to Red Milligan's," I said, but it didn't sound as casual as I wished it did. "I just dropped in as I was passing to—to leave an order for Charley Colden. If you can't find him any place else you can find him there." Then I laughed—that would show that I

BOONE STOP

knew the kind of people to be found at a pool-hall. People like Charley Colden and Red Milligan, but nobody like me—except once in a while when I dropped in to leave an express order or something.

“Yes, I’ve seen him around here now and then,” said Mr. Chambers. “Do you play pool?”

“I don’t know anything about it,” I put in, quickly. But maybe they had seen me at the table. I would have to explain that. “I knocked some balls around this evening while I was waiting for Charley Colden—but that is all.”

“That’s too bad. I thought maybe I could get up a game with you.”

“Do you play?” Was it possible that a big lawyer like Mr. Chambers played?

“I used to, but I’m pretty badly out of practice now. But I’m thinking of enlarging our second floor and putting in a table.”

That was astonishing. He not only played, but he intended having a table in his home! Then it couldn’t be so bad. Red Milligan no longer was a citizen to be spoken of apologetically. He was a hard-working man who chose this way to give people pleasure and to support his wife instead of selling groceries. That was his business; there was no reason why we should look down on him if he chose to deal in pool-tables instead of in onions.

“That would be fine,” I said. “Do you know any fancy shots?” He would now see, when I mentioned fancy shots, that my statement that I did not know much about it came from modesty. All good players spoke that way about themselves.

“No, nothing fancy. I don’t know anything

BOONE STOP

about the professional side of it. I play just to amuse myself."

I had gone a step too far. I must assure him that I didn't go in for it in a professional sense. That was getting in Red Milligan's class. "I like a game after supper sometimes," I said. We were now just two business men talking about our favorite game.

"Yes, that is the time—on a full stomach. We will have a game some time. Come on down the street with us. We are just walking."

Which side should I take? Should I walk on the inside with Cleo or on the outside with Mr. Chambers? There were so many problems to be solved, and especially around girls. There didn't seem to be any book telling about such things. When you hired a livery team and took a girl out riding, should you help the girl out first or should you tie the team and then help her out?

Maybe Cleo ought to be in the middle. If I didn't get in the right place everybody would notice, because when you walk down the street with a girl everybody sees you and they talk about it if you don't do it right. Walking down the street with a girl was a big thing and it must be done right.

But what was right? That was the question. I would let Mr. Chambers decide.

"All right," I said, and stood still.

But Mr. Chambers didn't seem to be thinking about the etiquette of it. He just stepped up next to me so he could talk. We started down the street, with Mr. Chambers talking about pool or something, but I wasn't thinking much about what he was saying. I was thinking if I was doing it correctly and

BOONE STOP

about the people looking. People don't seem to have anything to do when you walk down the street with a girl but look. Once in a while I would laugh to show Mr. Chambers that I was paying attention.

Finally Mr. Chambers stopped and looked around at me kind of funny; then he began to talk about how he used to court a girl. I don't know what made him think of it. He seemed to get a lot of pleasure out of it and laughed a good deal, but I couldn't see anything funny about it. He would snap his fingers and say:

"By gicks! I'll never forget the first time I went to see a girl and stayed later than I should. Her father—he was one of those long-haired, hard-shell Baptists—wouldn't let anybody stay later than ten, but this night the first thing I knew it struck eleven. It hadn't any more than finished before I heard somebody stirring around in her father's bedroom, so I pulled off my shoes and started to slip out and"—Mr. Chambers stopped to snap his fingers—"and, by gicks! I stepped in the fly-paper!"

Snapping his fingers, he rocked back on his heels as if he was addressing a jury. But I didn't see anything funny about it. I opened my mouth and pretended to be laughing, too, but I was thinking if I should go home with Cleo, or what. What was manners? Should I leave now or should I go all the way?

"Won't you come in for a while?" said Mr. Chambers when at last we reached their steps. What should I say? Was that a chance for me to excuse myself or should I wait for an invitation from Cleo?

BOONE STOP

"Couldn't you play something for him, Cleo?"

"I haven't practised lately," said Cleo, and laughed, so I laughed, too, and was trying to think of the right thing to say when a lady refused, but before I could think of anything Mr. Chambers put his hands under her elbows and pushed her into the parlor.

It wasn't any organ, but a piano with stylish music. The Chamberses were rich and had a colored man to wait on the table. Pa never liked a piano. He always said that it sounded like somebody beating on a tin pan. I was glad that Cleo didn't know that Pa did not like pianos. She would think that I wasn't good enough for her.

Stiff and straight she sat, while I wondered what I would talk about when she was through. It would have to be about something stylish—about the mines or how jack was running wouldn't interest her. I would have to talk about fashions or New York. But I didn't know anything about them. I wished that I had been away to college, like Ozy; then I could talk to her about things that way.

Her father began to sing 'way down in his throat and to beat time with his finger, with his face drawn up into a comical expression. He would look at me once in a while and then smile and seem to be having a good time.

"Well, I'll leave you two children alone," he said; and then he turned back and said through the door, "I'll leave you alone—but look out for the fly-paper!"

Then he slammed the door and went away, laughing. Cleo looked at me and I looked at her,

BOONE STOP

and she smiled a little and I smiled, but it seemed to me that he could just as well have left it unsaid. Sometimes grown people don't seem to have as fine feelings as they should.

It was pretty hard to get started to talking about anything after he left. Playing music that way seemed to make us farther apart. She was so refined and everything that I felt awkward.

I must say something—I couldn't sit there all night like a dummy. "Have you ever heard Jenny Lind or any of those great musicians?" I asked.

"No," she said; "I just bang off a few things. I am going to take lessons again some day."

"I suppose it just comes natural."

"What little there is of it."

I couldn't think of anything else; that was about all I knew about music. I would have to find something else. The mines wouldn't do; they were right here at home, and she was used to them, anyway. I would have to get one of those New York view books and study up on the buildings.

I would have to stick to music. "I think you play beautifully."

"Do you?" she asked, taking a little more interest.

I told her I certainly did, and got up a little closer, and pretty soon we weren't talking about New York or fashions or anything that way—we were just talking about ourselves. It was surprising how much there was to say about ourselves and to find how much alike we were and yet how different. She liked vanilla ice-cream best and I liked chocolate, and then I told her how I had liked vanilla best, too, till one day I slipped out to the pantry

BOONE STOP

and drank half a bottle of vanilla and since that time chocolate had always been my favorite. Then she said strawberry was her second favorite and I said that was mine, too. Then we saw how much alike we were, and the first thing we knew we were talking about the strawberry festival.

Now was a good chance; I would ask her to go. I didn't care what Pa said nor if she was an atheist's daughter. I would ask her just the same.

"Miss Chambers," I said, getting up and walking around—then they can't see how nervous you are. She looked at me in surprise. To call her Cleo now didn't seem right. That was all right when we were just talking about ice-cream or what was your favorite soda pop, but now it was different.

"Miss Chambers, will you give me the pleasure of your company to the strawberry festival?"

"You mean to-night up at the church?"

"Yes."

"Wait a moment till I ask Papa."

I tried sitting still while she was out, but I couldn't. I wiped my face and along the side of my nose where it gets shiny, and wished the piano was an organ so that it would have a mirror, and straightened a picture on the wall, and pulled out the carpet where it was wrinkled under one of the legs, and felt to see if my buttons were all buttoned, and counted fifty. Then she came back and said yes she would be pleased to go.

VIII

Pa takes me in the parlor and shuts the door, but he doesn't do anything. Ozy Getchell has supper at our house and Pa has a good time talking.

THE next morning after the strawberry festival I woke up early. I felt that something was going to happen. I was up and dressed even before Ma called. Ma was now the one who called us; she had taken over the responsibility since we had got bigger. But in the days when we had to be yanked out of bed Pa was the one to do it.

"Breakfast is ready," she called, and by the way she said it I knew that I would have to settle for last night.

Mid was usually the last one to get down, but now we met at the head of the stairs. He didn't say anything; he just pulled his glasses over his ears and stared at me. As I bent over the sink in the kitchen I saw him standing at the towel-rack, pretending to be wiping behind his ears, but he was only making motions. He was studying me.

At breakfast they all avoided looking at me, as they had done when Mr. Dobson had cut my hair. But they had looked at me enough the night before at the festival. Pa had followed me around with

BOONE STOP

unbelieving eyes for a while, then he had turned his back on me. But I hadn't cared. When he would look at me I would laugh and pretend to be having a good time. I didn't care if she was an infidel's daughter. But now, after it was all over and sitting at breakfast with the family, it seemed different. I didn't feel quite so brave. Pa looked older than I had ever seen him. Small strands of white were beginning to appear in his beard and especially on his lower lip where the food went over, and in the corners of his mouth.

When he had finished Pa placed his knife and fork parallel on his plate and looked at me with steady, unwavering eyes.

"I want to see you in the parlor." It was the same way he used to say, "I want to see you out behind the smoke-house." I knew what that meant.

Mid looked for something to do. Taking a toothpick, he bent it together and then let it straighten out with little jerky movements, like when you hold a match under a grasshopper. Then he clicked his tongue as if he was expecting something nice.

When Pa saw me at the strawberry festival with Cleo he stared as if the Angel had come again. I found Ma reaching down in the ice-cream freezer with a long-handled spoon and waited for her to look up, but she didn't. Gran'ma was washing dishes in the hot water brought from the parsonage. She always got the hard work to do.

"Let the younger ones have a good time," she would say, and lean her cane against the table and pull up her sleeves. "I've had my day. You're young only once."

BOONE STOP

"Gran'ma!" I called to her. I expected her to look toward me and smile; but she didn't. She kept looking at the dishes and washing harder than ever. Pa was a few feet behind her, breaking up ice in a gunny sack. Maybe that was the reason she would not speak.

In the parlor Pa closed the door behind us. I looked him squarely in the eyes.

"Well, what is it?" I said. I would show him that I could decide some things for myself. I picked out a spot between his eyes. If he said anything I would plant my fist there and then walk into the other room and say, "He's in there—if you want to do anything for him." It had all changed since the smoke-house days.

I took a step toward him. "Well, what is it?" I said again. As I came forward Pa stepped toward me, the hazelnuts beginning to come in his jaw, while between his teeth he sucked in his breath. The same way he had stood, with his hands gripped, when he had faced the railroad men. Then as we faced each other Pa's eyes began to go down. They stopped at my neck, hesitated a moment, then traveled down the row of buttons. It was the first time I had ever seen Pa lower his eyes to any one. I did not understand it.

Suddenly he relaxed, like when you're wrestling with somebody and quit before the other fellow does. Then he brought his hands together in front of his breast like a Bible picture and lifted his eyes to heaven.

"Sit down, my son. I wish to counsel with thee," he said, and with that he began to read from the Bible.

BOONE STOP

In the same deep, heavy voice he had read to the converts on the porch he read to me, his finger traveling across the lines, stopping once in a while as he looked up at me to go on again, pronouncing the names without the least hesitation. He was mighty good at pronouncing and remembering which were the Sadducees and which the Pharisees. I wasn't very much interested in them till they got in a battle and then it wouldn't last very long. It would have been more interesting if they had spent less time telling who begat each other and told more about the battles.

"We will now pray," said Pa, getting down on his knees. He began with the world in general, but it didn't take him long to get down to the erring one. But I didn't care; I knew that I could stand it if he could. I heard the first whistle at the mine blow and I knew that Pa would have to stop pretty soon, and so I twisted over on the other leg and put the other hand under my forehead. On the sidewalk I could hear the men going by in their hobnailed shoes, and when one foot would come down harder than the other I knew that it was Floyd Freeman who had lost a leg when a stick of dynamite had gone off too soon, and now had to run the hoist-engine because he couldn't work in the ground with a wooden leg; and when two men came along arguing about the tariff I knew that it was Joe Gap and old man Bosley, so I gritted my teeth and saw how long I could hold my breath. Then suddenly Pa said, "Amen," and, putting one hand on the table and the other on the rocking-chair, he started to get up. I guess it had been just as hard on him

BOONE STOP

as it had on me, because the chair rocked pretty hard.

Picking up my dinner-bucket I started for the mine, and as I pushed the gate to behind me I began to whistle. I would show Mid that I didn't care. But as soon as I got out of sight of the house I quit whistling. And even while I was whistling I was thinking about Pa and wondering why he had dropped his eyes.

Behind me I heard Pa trying to catch up, but I didn't want to talk about the joy of forgiveness, so I began to walk faster. It didn't take me very long to get ahead of him. He was getting so he couldn't walk as fast as he used to.

As I went into the change-house at the mine I couldn't help thinking of the difference between now and when Pa had first come to the mine, six years before. Then the men swore all the time; if they couldn't get the key in their locker they swore, and if the soap slipped out of their hands they swore, and if the match went out they swore some more. But now it was different.

From the Sunday-school room Pa brought Bible posters showing the draft of fishes and the ram caught by the horns in the bushes, and tacked them up over some poetry the men had written on the wall and over a drawing of a woman without any clothes on. One morning one of the Bible posters was torn down so that you could see the woman without any clothes on.

Pa gave just one look and went to the Sunday-school room and brought another poster. The next morning this was torn down. Hazelnuts stood on

BOONE STOP

Pa's jaw, but without a word he went to the Sunday-school room again.

The next morning he hurried to the change-house early, but already the poster was torn down. That afternoon Ed Brogan, a tub-hooker, was killed. The pigtail clamp holding the bucket to the cable had twisted and snapped and the bucket had shot down the shaft. Half-way to the top Ed breathed his last. In his pocket was found part of the Bible poster.

After that Pa had no trouble in keeping posters in the change-house.

To the sludge-room he had come to put Bible posters on the wall, but the sludge boss had stopped him. "Not by the hell of a sight you don't while I am here," he said. A few days after that the sludge boss had his arm torn off in the jig, and when he got out of the hospital he put up the Mount of Olives himself.

At the shaft I waited, and while I was waiting Speed Mosby came up, standing with one leg inside and with one leg outside the bucket, his arm around the cable, water-drops from the lacing-boards still fresh on his hat. Already he had been down examining the pillars and watching the water. He was big and tall and you could see hair over the top of his undershirt.

"Good morning, men," he called. "All on time, I see. That's the way. Be careful when you're blowing that southwest breast. A little head will save a lot of fingers—that's what I say."

Everybody he knew by name, and for them all he had a word or a slap on the shoulder. Some of the

BOONE STOP

owners had nothing to say to their men, but Speed Mosby had been a shoveler himself.

I couldn't help looking at the diamonds on his fingers. Some of them had turned inside, but he didn't pay any attention to them. All he was thinking about was getting things done. When anything went wrong about the Ruby D. he was the one to fix it, no matter what. If the steam-drill got out of fix Speed Mosby was the one to get it back; if one of the powder-monkeys got drunk Speed Mosby would take his place till a call could be sent out for another, or if any one got the cramps he was the one who knew what to do for him. When Pa had come to apply for a job Mr. Mosby had looked him over and said: "We don't need any more men, but you've got a clear eye. I'll put you on the screen." And so Pa had gone to work on the tailings pile. One day one of the pumps lost a leather and the water was coming up faster than they could get it out, and Speed Mosby was swearing away till you could hear him all over the lower level. Coming up, Pa stood beside him and said:

"I wish you wouldn't do that, brother. The Lord is down here two hundred feet in the ground just the same as He is up above. Did you ever think of that?"

Speed Mosby turned and began to swear harder than ever.

"Have you read the first and second verses of Romans two?" asked Pa.

Speed Mosby wiped the back of his hand across his mouth and began to swear again. When he finished he said he hadn't.

BOONE STOP

Reaching in his pocket, Pa brought out his small Testament and, taking the lamp from its leather in his hat, he held it up for Mr. Mosby. Mr. Mosby read the verses, holding a double-chain stillson in his hand as if it was a toothpick, moving his lips over the words. When he finished he closed the book and handed it back gently.

"I'll be damned," he said, but he fixed the pump without swearing any more.

After that every time Pa came around he would stop and follow him with his eyes. Then one day he sent word for Pa to come up. When Pa had come back he was ground boss with four hundred men under him.

"Hello, son!" said Mr. Mosby, when he saw me, and slapped me on the back.

I felt proud. It was something to have a rich man like Speed Mosby notice you.

But when Pa came up he didn't slap him on the back. He said good morning and kind of lowered his voice as if he was speaking to a preacher.

Stepping in the bucket, I got a grip on the cable. "Let 'er go," said one of the men, and down we dropped. I looked up, watching the hole get smaller and smaller. At last it wasn't square any more; just round and kind of dim and far away, while we seemed to be standing still and the shaft rushing past us. The moment we touched the platform I jumped out. It made me afraid to stand under the open shaft with the buckets coming and going; I couldn't help remembering how Ed Brogan, the tub-hooker, had been killed. If anything went wrong—if the cable parted or a pigtail snapped—

BOONE STOP

the hoistman at the top of the shaft knocked a switch shut which rang a bell at the bottom of the shaft so that the men could leap out of the way before the bucket got down. But sometimes the bucket got down first and then the lodge had to turn out. It always seemed to me, when I was getting out, that a bucket was coming, and I would jump under the bank, but this only made the men laugh. One day one of the men grabbed me and made me stand on the sump till he sent three buckets up and down, and when I would look up at them swaying in the shaft it would seem to me that they had broken loose from the thread that was holding them and I would fight to get away, but the man only held me tighter. He was killed a few weeks later, when the bell failed to ring, but I didn't feel sorry. I went around with the rest of them when he was lying in his coffin, but I didn't care very much. I couldn't help thinking how he had held me in the shaft.

All day I kept away from Pa as far as I could, and instead of having dinner with the men sitting under one of the open shafts I had it off behind a pillar by myself, and when I got through I tickled one of the mules and watched him kick, but it wasn't very much fun. It was a long day, and when the bell sounded I made for the shaft as fast as I could, glad that the day was over.

As I was going home a team came swinging down our street with a buggy whip cracking over their backs. I was looking at them, but I wasn't thinking about them. I was thinking about Pa and wondering if he was going to speak to me at supper. Then the horses were suddenly pulled up and I

BOONE STOP

saw that it was Ozy Getchell and Susie. He was bringing her back from a drive in the country and he had a livery team. As I saw him pull up the horses till the buggy-tongue lifted their collars straight out, I couldn't help thinking how some boys could do things. They always had dash and never had to hesitate about how to do a thing, but with me I never knew how to go about anything. Especially with the gentle sex. Some boys always knew whether to walk down the aisle ahead of the ladies or behind them, and whether to spread the lap-robe over the back of the seat or put it over your lady. Ozy was one of that kind; he always knew what to do.

"Hello there!" he called. "Be this where Isom Seed lives?" And with that he tipped his hat because he had a lady with him, and the way he said "Be this" was enough to make anybody laugh. Ozy could always think of something funny to say. Of course he knew Pa lived there, especially when he was coming around two or three times a week to see Susie, but that made it all the funnier.

"Anybody to hum?" he asked, turning the wheel around so that Susie could get out. Ozy laughed again and I saw how funny it was—lots of people didn't know any better than to talk that way.

"Whoa there, Bill! Whoa there, Buck!" he called, as if the horses were deaf. We knew that he didn't know the names of the team, because they were livery horses, and that made it still funnier, and especially a bit later when he called them Maud and Sal. Pulling the horses' heads in to the hitch-rack, he got out first, and then, putting his hand under

BOONE STOP

Susie's elbow, with his fingers out straight as if he was having his fortune told, he helped her out mighty fine. Ozy knew how to do everything around the ladies.

Then he sent word up to the livery stable for Jim Pinneo to come after the horses. I would never have thought of that. I wouldn't have known any better than to take them back myself. But Ozy knew everything that way. He had the advantage of a college education.

Susie led him up to the best room. "Step in, Ozy. You'll find water and a towel and everything."

If it had been anybody else they would have had to come down to the kitchen sink with the rest of us, but with Ozy it was different; he was not used to washing in the kitchen.

When I got washed up and went out on the front porch, there was Ozy with his hair parted in the middle, like New York, sitting on the porch talking to Pa about the Bible. Pa was doing most of the talking, but once in a while Ozy nodded his head to show that in the main Pa was right. Ozy knew how to talk to every member of the family. Sometimes when I went to see girls and their fathers or mothers came around I couldn't think of anything to say, but Ozy could. And when they had little baby brothers or sisters he could play with them. But I couldn't. Specially babies. I hated babies, always crying and eating something. But Ozy didn't. He would put them on his foot and play horsie with them, and never care whether they wrinkled up his silk socks or not.

When we went in to supper he held Gran'ma's

BOONE STOP

chair and put his hand under her arms with his fingers out straight as if she would never be able to make it without his help. I had already dropped into my chair, and I felt mighty small that I couldn't think of things that way. Gran'ma had been getting down in her chair alone for fifty years, but Ozy straightened up and looked as if it had all depended on him. And when Pa began to thank the Lord for what we had before us and to sanctify it to His name, Ozy put his hands together between his knees and bent over till his face was almost in his plate.

I waited till Pa got through to see how he was going to treat me; to see whether he was going to be silent for days, as he had been when I had had my hair cut off, or whether he was going to talk. Picking up the bread-plate he hesitated which way to pass it. Always it had come down my side of the table first and back on the other, but now Ozy was sitting on the other side, and company must always be passed to first. The plate wavered a moment then went to Ozy, and I felt my heart go down. But when it got around to me he spoke, and I knew it was all right.

"Take off a big piece, Cleveland," he said as if I was company. "You had a pretty hard shift to-day."

Then Gran'ma looked up and smiled, and I felt good all over. I took off the size he mentioned, but I couldn't help wondering why Pa had let his eyes fall.

IX

I find that playing pool and smoking ten-cent cigars is more fun than sitting around home and listening to Pa read the Bible. I get invited to the Copus Club and decide to be a gentleman.

RED MILLIGAN could hitch up his britches, roll a cigarette with one hand, and make the best shot I ever saw. He would hang the cigarette in the corner of his mouth, take a match between his fingers and crack the head with his thumb-nail as if it wasn't anything at all. If you went off by yourself and tried to light a match with your thumb-nail you would find it mighty hard to do. But Red Milligan never bragged about it; he would just go ahead and do it and never say anything about it. If you were not watching you would not get to see him, that was all.

"Hello, old sport!" he said, when I stepped inside a few months later. "I thought you was never coming back."

That was the way with him; he always treated a fellow like an equal. There wasn't anything uppish about him.

"What's the matter you never come around any more—your father been sitting on you?" With

BOONE STOP

that he winked and looked around at the other fellows.

"Not much," I said. "I wouldn't take anything off him."

Red laughed, and put his hand on my shoulder, and left it there for some time. "I thought," he said, going over to the cigarette-counter and opening a package of cigarettes and passing me one—"I thought you was that kind. It don't take me long to tell 'em."

I could see that Red Milligan was careful about the people he made friends with. He wouldn't take up with just anybody who came along; he had to know that the fellow had the real stuff in him.

When he put it that way I saw it, too. It was because I was independent. Pa couldn't sit on me.

"The old man didn't want me to come, but I looked him in the eye and said, 'Well, what you going to do about it?' Then I walked out."

"Have another," said Red Milligan, and held out a match for me. "I thought you was that kind. I can spot 'em. Come on and I'll show you how to play the cushions." And then right in front of everybody he balanced my cue and said that I needed a 14½ and put talcum powder on my fingers and showed me how to play. Red Milligan never wasted time on anybody unless he thought they had the real stuff in them.

I hadn't said those words to Pa—I couldn't help remembering that—but I had looked him in the eye after supper and walked out without saying where I was going. It was about the same thing. Red was

BOONE STOP

a mighty busy man, so I wouldn't stop to explain the difference.

"You're learning fine. I never had anybody catch on quicker."

I knew all of them in the chairs along the wall were taking it in, but I would show them that I was not stuck up about it. "Oh, I don't know," I said. "It seems to me some of the shots are pretty wild."

"Got to expect that at first," said Red, running his thumbs down on the inside of his belt and hitching up his trousers. "Taking everything into consideration—that's what I mean. You hang around here a few months and you'll be a wonder."

When he said that I kind of laughed through my nose and shook my head to show them that even if it was true it was a long ways off. A fellow doesn't want to get egotistical; if he does the other men won't have any use for him.

The door opened while Red was showing me how to use the rake, but we didn't look up. When Red was showing a fellow how to be an expert he didn't pay any attention to other people—they could just wait till he got ready.

There was a rapping on the cigar-counter and there was Merle Sewell with a quarter between his fingers. "Come on, Red," he called. "Shake a foot. I can't stay here all night."

When Red saw that it was Merle Sewell he stopped quick enough, not taking time to put his cue away; he just leaned it against the wall and hurried to the counter. Merle Sewell was the richest boy in town and had a rubber-tired buggy of his own. When he put his buggy in the shed he didn't

BOONE STOP

leave his whip to draggle in the socket—he hung it up by the cracker and then when he took a lady out driving it was nice and straight. He had the best team in Boone Stop and nobody ever passed him. He would take up his whip and give the horses a cut, and nobody could get ahead of him, no difference how much they tried. The lady who rode with him was always sure to be in the front.

“Give me a cigar,” said Merle.

Merle never lowered his voice when he was calling for anything. He never had to be ashamed of his order.

“Give me one of those ten-centers. How about it, Red—three for a quarter?” It was a good deal in the way he said it and in the way he squinted up his eye and held it till Red said yes. A lot of fellows would never have made a bargain like that; but Merle was good at making people do things he wanted them to.

“Want a smoke?” asked Merle, walking back and holding out a cigar to me as if it wasn’t anything more than a cigarette. “Thought maybe you’d like to have a puff or two.”

Merle had singled me out from all the rest! I felt good all over. I was getting up in the world. In one evening Red Milligan had picked me out from all the others to show me the fancy shots and Merle Sewell was walking back to give me a ten-cent cigar. The pool-hall was a mighty fine place; it was a lot better than sitting around home and listening to Pa read the Bible.

“Yes,” I said. “I don’t mind. Thanks.” I knew how to act. I mustn’t thank him too much,

BOONE STOP

because that would show that I knew he was the son of the richest man in town. I must take it as if it wasn't anything and, when I had smoked about half of it, throw it away.

"Thought maybe you would like to have a puff or two," Merle had said.

That was the way Merle smoked cigars; he didn't smoke them down as far as he could and then haul out a toothpick. He would smoke them down a ways and then throw them away without ever turning to see where they went. I knew how to act around men, but I wasn't so good around girls. They were different. You couldn't treat them like other people. They never smoked or chewed or swore or anything. When you were with them you had to watch and see what they would do and then do the same thing, except with your little finger out.

"Want to have a game?" asked Merle.

"I don't mind tearing off one with you."

That sounded professional. That would show that I was used to being around places where men gathered—real men—not people like Mid. The more I thought about it the better I liked it—"tearing off one with you." I would always use that. That showed that I knew how to talk around a pool-hall and it kind of showed that I was doing him a favor, too. I was not one to make up to Merle Sewell just because his father owned the Paradise.

"All right," he said. "You bust."

Coming back, Red Milligan stood beside me and hitched up his pants. I wished I didn't have on

BOONE STOP

suspenders. I saw that if a fellow was ever going to amount to anything as a pool-player that he would have to wear a belt.

Sprinkling some talcum powder on my hand, I bent over and let the corner ball have it.

"All you need is a little practice," said Red, putting his hand on my shoulder and leaving it there till he had to make change.

Merle was a good player; he didn't have to take his cigar out of his mouth. But I threw mine away first. Just a few whiffs; then throw it away and light a fresh one. He could see that was what I was accustomed to.

"Oh, by the way," said Merle, lowering his voice and looking around, "I want to tell you something." Winking up his cheek, he jerked his head toward the end of the row of chairs where there was no one seated. I could see it was something that he did not want the others to know about. It marked me from the other men in the hall. I played pool with them and listened to their talk, but, after all, I was the one that Merle Sewell asked off to one side. But I must not show it; I must appear as if it wasn't anything, so I stopped to watch a pool-shot. But I didn't really see it. I saw the cue draw back, pause a moment, and then strike out, but I didn't know whether it was a good shot or not.

"Have one," said Merle, unbuttoning the pocket of his silk shirt and bringing out a package of Kis-Me chewing-gum. Merle always carried that kind and had a good time when he gave it to some of the girls. Merle knew how to make himself interesting to the weaker sex.

BOONE STOP

Snapping off the rubber, he handed me a cake and helped himself to a couple. "They're good while they're sweet," he said and put them both in.

I saw then that I had always been chewing it wrong; I would put in a bit at a time and chew it till all the sweet was gone, and then put in a little more fresh. But now I saw that wasn't the way society people chewed it; they chewed it till the sweet was gone, spit it out, and thought no more about it. You could learn a lot by associating with the right kind of people. The men in the mines were all right, but they worked in their undershirts and chewed Mail Pouch. They were well meaning, but they didn't know the proper way to do things.

"Yes," I said, "just a few bites and then throw it away."

Merle could see that I had been around; my father wasn't as rich as his father was, but he saw that I knew the proper way to do things. Grown people never seemed to stop to think about such things; they didn't seem to recognize the importance of little things. They were so busy with their mines and stores that they never stopped to think about the things that mattered. They had got past the age where they cared about the proper way to conduct themselves. Most of them were married, so it didn't matter.

Putting one foot on the leather bottom of the chair and resting his elbow on his thigh, Merle lowered his voice. So I put my foot on the seat of the next chair and bent over so that my ear would be near. Lots of fellows would have been afraid to put their feet on the leather seats, but

BOONE STOP

Merle and I were not. Red Milligan wouldn't say anything to us; he might get after the miners, but Merle Sewell and I were different. We were drawing-cards for his pool-hall.

"I want to talk to you about the Copus Club."

The Copus Club! I could hardly believe my ears. Merle Sewell, the richest boy in town, wanted to talk to me about the Copus Club. The Copus Club was the society club of Boone Stop. Only rich people belonged, and they had their meetings and entertainments behind closed doors and the *Boone Stop Banner* had them written up by the society reporter and called them functions. No old people or anything that way belonged to the Copus Club; just the people who knew the correct way to do things. If you went down the back alley behind Hoehn's, the Quality Store, after they had had a function, you could see champagne-bottles in a box waiting to be taken away. They had colored waiters in dress-suits to bring them their food, and a man in uniform to stand outside the door so nobody except members could get in. Even if you went to the club-rooms in the daytime you couldn't get in; they always kept the door locked, and when people went to their function they would ride home in landaus. But Pa said it was the work of the devil, and in his prayers he would ask the Lord to remove this menace from our midst.

"Great place," I said. That showed that the club was all right, but also that I was used to such things.

"We are going to have a shindig up there the twelfth, and each member has the right to ask a

BOONE STOP

friend. I thought maybe you would like to go. You know I am president."

You couldn't read the *Banner* very long without knowing that. And Merle Sewell, the president, was asking me to be his special guest! Maybe I would be asked to join, if I made a good showing that night. Then I would be somebody. I could go with any girl in town, and mighty glad she would be to go with me, too. But I must not let Merle see what I was thinking about; I must not accept too quickly.

"The twelfth?" I said, wrinkling up my brows. "Let me see—the twelfth." Turning, I looked at a champagne calendar on the wall, of a girl smoking a cigarette on a tiger-skin—Red Milligan knew how to select calendars. "That's on a Saturday, isn't it? Why, yes, that evening would be agreeable to me—as far as I know now."

"It's going to be quite a little affair. Going to have Magruder's Five-piece Orchestra from Kansas City."

"Those five-piece orchestras are pretty good," I said to show him that I knew what they were like, but not so enthusiastically as not to leave it open that a six-piece orchestra wasn't better. You could probably get an eight-piece orchestra from Chicago. In New York maybe they would have ten.

"They're there with the lolly-lolly music," said Merle, snapping his fingers and swaying as if already in the rhythm of a dance. "You can dance, all right?" he asked, stopping for a moment, as if he knew that I could but just wanted to make sure.

BOONE STOP

I hadn't thought of that. But I mustn't let him know that I couldn't. What would he think of me? He wouldn't associate with me if he knew I didn't know how to dance. You had to know how, to be anybody these days. It was different in Pa's day, but now they were smarter and more fashionable than they used to be.

"Oh yes," I said, spitting out my gum. Did he think I was the kind of person who didn't know how to dance? "But I don't suppose I know as much about it as some of them." I would show him that I was modest.

"If you are a little rusty you could get Miss Hartwig to polish you up a little. She gives lessons up there Monday and Wednesday nights. Just mention my name. Then they'll let you in."

That was all you had to do when you were a friend of Merle Sewell—just mention his name and the doors would open.

"Have a smoke," I said and wrapped on the counter with a quarter. "Got anything that will burn?" That was the way to talk. "How about those?" I asked, pointing to a box that had a card pinned on the lid that said "2 for 25c." Red Milligan handed out the box; he didn't pick up a couple of cigars and drop them on the counter. Instead of that he brought out the whole box; he knew how to treat gentlemen. Taking up one of the cigars, I sniffed it and waved toward the box for Merle to follow. "They smell pretty fair." One mustn't be too quick to praise anything; not if you wanted to show that you were accustomed to the best.

BOONE STOP

"Native leaf, Connecticut wrapper," said Red, and I saw then that I had pretty good judgment. "Just got them in. They're having a big run this season."

"They're wrapped a bit tight," said Merle, taking his between his hands and rolling it, "but they're not bad."

"Yes, they are a bit tight," I agreed, "but they are fresh. That's one thing."

Bending over, I started to put my cigar in the advertising cutter, and then I saw the mistake I had made. Reaching in his pocket, Merle brought out his gold cigar-nipper and snapped off the end of his cigar. But I didn't let him see what I meant to do by leaning over the counter. I bent over still farther and peered through the glass as if maybe I could find a better cigar. Then I straightened up and began feeling through my pockets.

"Use this one," said Merle, passing his cutter on to me. "It's a bit dull, but I guess it'll do the work."

I snipped off the end. "It's not bad."

Swinging the lighter over to Merle, I waited for him to get his going. We knew how to conduct ourselves as gentlemen—no biting off the ends of our cigars and using sulphur matches.

"Come back any time—always glad to have you," said Red as we were going out. "All you need is a little practice," he said to me. "You've got the eye."

It wasn't everybody Red Milligan invited back; he was independent. He wanted just the best people. And when a fellow had the makings of a good

BOONE STOP

player in him he didn't mind telling him so. It was too bad that Red was tied down by a wife and family so that he couldn't travel around and be a champion. Especially since his wife wouldn't take in washing any more.

"Going down this way?" asked Merle, nodding toward the Square.

"No, I guess I'll stroll on home. See you later."

"So long."

"So long."

That was the way men talked. Mid wouldn't have known what to say. He'd said "Good night" or "Good-by." He didn't know anything about associating with men.

"See you at the Club some evening," called Merle, stopping to brush off the ashes with his little finger.

He called it the Club. That was what members called it—just the Club. To outsiders, who could never hope to get in, it was the Copus Club.

"We'll tear off a game first, then go up to the Club," I said, and, flicking off the ashes with my little finger, I started on down the street, but when Merle was out of sight I spit on the cigar. It was too good a cigar to smoke in one evening. I would finish it some other night in the pool-hall. The band was all right, not burned or anything.

Pa was sitting on the porch with his sock feet on the railing, in plain view of everybody passing along the street. It did seem to me that Pa could be more careful of his personal appearance. What would Merle Sewell think if he saw him? Or Cleo Chambers? Their fathers never sat around with their feet on the railing. If Pa didn't care himself, he might

BOONE STOP

think about his family. It was hard enough to get up in the world without having your father sit around like a hired hand.

As I was turning in, a foaming team came dashing up. "Be this whar Isom Seed lives?" called the driver, jerking the horses back on their britching.

"Yes, this be," called Pa. "I'll see if he is to hum." He would joke with Ozy, but he never would with me. He liked Ozy.

"Where have you been?" asked Gran'ma, coming to the door.

"We did get back a bit late," said Ozy, straightening out his fingers and putting his hand under Susie's elbow. "That is, late for old folks," and then he laughed, and Pa laughed, too. But Gran'ma didn't. "We stopped and had supper at the Mineral Springs—that was what made us late."

I went in to wash out my mouth and get a drink of water. When I came back Gran'ma seemed to be all right and was leaning back in her rocking-chair listening to Pa and Ozy talk about the Bible.

X

I decide to be a graceful and accomplished dancer for three dollars. I put my arm around a girl and don't think anything about it.

PA and I never walked over to the mine together. We liked each other, but we seemed to be interested in different things. To Pa the world was not as good as it used to be; to me the good things were still to come. We would start out together of a morning and begin to talk, but pretty soon we would run out of things to say. Pa was good at talking about the weather, but I never paid any attention to the weather. The only time I ever noticed the weather was when it was raining. When it cleared up I never noticed that we had any until it started to rain again.

Pa had never been the same since we had gone out on the hill to await the end of the world. He had never mentioned it after the time he said that the Lord had sent it as a test of his faith, but I could see that it was on his mind. I was good at seeing things that way. But Mid never noticed anything. All he thought about was getting something to eat and going to bed.

I liked Pa better when I wasn't with him. If I

BOONE STOP

went visiting or anything, and was gone from Pa awhile, I began to think how old he was growing and how hard he was working and how much he was doing for us, but when I came back I would forget all about it. Every time we would get started to talking about elephants or robbers or John L. Sullivan he would turn it off into something about the Lord. We would start in to talk about John L. Sullivan and I would ask how much that diamond belt was worth, and he would say that it was worth a good deal of wealth, as the world termed it, but that it could not be compared to the golden crown of the Lord. But such things didn't interest me any more. I was more interested in things you could see, or buy a ticket to, but Pa kept right on talking about the Lord and how near He was at hand. At first when he talked about how near He was at hand I would look around or lie still in bed and listen, but I never saw anything. If the Lord wouldn't show Himself on the day we got ready for Him, then there wasn't any use in spending any time on Him. There was too many interesting things in the world for that; if you would go down the back alley behind No. 9 early in the morning you could find beer in the bottles. Especially after a rain.

When I walked with him I had to go slow, because he was limping more than he used to. Working in the ground wasn't good for his rheumatism. I would want to hurry on to the change-house to hear the men tell stories, but Pa didn't. He would just say good morning and go down in the mine, but I would stay till the last bucket. Mighty good stories they were, too. But Pa never liked them. When one of

BOONE STOP

the men was telling a story and saw Pa coming he would stop to pick his teeth or reach for his tobacco till Pa was out of hearing, then he would go on. They were lots more interesting than Bible stories, and made you laugh, too. Sometimes when the men would finish telling their stories they would grab me and rub my hair the wrong way. But the stories were worth waiting for. Sometimes when Mid came out to the mine they would tell stories before him and rub his hair the wrong way, but he always ran home and told Ma. But I didn't; I wasn't that kind.

One morning when I came over to the mine the men were not telling stories. When Pa came in they did not speak to him. No one said good morning, or anything. They pretended not to see him and went on talking in a low voice. Putting on his overalls and jumper, Pa went out with his gloves tucked under his arm, but instead of going toward the shaft he turned off toward the office. Mr. Mosby seemed to be expecting him and opened the door for him himself, and then they pulled down the window-blinds.

"Watch out for a short fuse," said Shug Leffler and the men all looked toward me and lowered their voices.

I came up to hear what they were saying, but they didn't talk any more. Usually Shug Leffler was a big talker, too, but now he didn't have anything to say. A mighty good miner Shug was, too. "I was born in them," he would say, "and I can follow a drift with my eyes shut. All I want is plenty of chewing and Saturday night off." Give Shug a helper and

BOONE STOP

he would shoot a breast by himself while an ordinary crew was stringing the fuse. On the door-jamb he marked his height, and he said that when anybody put one above him he would kiss a nigger baby. But he didn't, because one day some of the boys called Pa and asked him to stand up with his back to the door-jamb. "I'm getting too old for that," said Pa, and started for the jack-dump; but they made him come back, and, sitting down on the door-sill, he pulled his feet up on his knees so as not to show how stiff he was and unbuckled his shoes. Putting his back to the jamb, he straightened up and went higher and higher as if he was never going to stop. And then one of the men standing on a dynamite-box took a carpenter's pencil and marked the place and wrote his name after it. But Shug didn't look for any colored people. He just turned up his nose and said this is where it counts, and lifted up his sleeve to give his muscle room. But the next day the door-jamb was all marked over so that they couldn't read anybody's name.

Two of Shug's fingers were missing where a squib shot had gone off before he was ready, and when you shook hands with him and looked down to see what was the matter he didn't care. He would laugh and chuck you under the chin and say: "Don't feel bad, sonny. I'm getting enough other two fingers to make up for it." He always said the same thing, so I knew that it was pretty good. Shug didn't have to shave as often as other men. He would get along for weeks without shaving and when he did his face would look like a hog in a butcher-shop window.

Pa didn't like Shug very well. His locker was

BOONE STOP

next to Shug's, but they never had much to say to each other. Sometimes they would talk about the weather and how the jack was running, but that was about all. Shug could always talk better when Pa was not there. When Pa had been made ground boss and Shug thought that he ought to have been, Shug went down to No. 9 and didn't get back for three or four days, and when he did he had a cut in the top of his head. But in a few days the cake was out of his hair and he was telling stories and ruffling my hair and putting soap in my eyes as if nothing was the matter.

As long as I was around the men didn't say anything. They just looked at one another, and once in a while drew down their lips. That was all. Even at the shaft they didn't. They were starting to get in when Pa came up, but they got out when they saw him and let him go down alone. While the drum was unwinding, one of the men kicked off a bit of clay. After a long time we heard it hit the bottom.

That afternoon a Pole was killed by an overhead shot. They sent him up in the stretcher basket, but he was dead before they could get him to the hospital.

But the Pole wasn't anything to me. I felt kind of choky when they pulled the dirt and rocks off his head, but I had other things to think of. Instead of worrying about him, I went up to the Copus Club. The Copus Club was a fine club. It had rooms of its own and didn't use them for anything else, the way the Eastern Star and some of the other clubs did. You went up the stairs over Hoehn's, the

BOONE STOP

Quality Store, with doctors' signs on every other step, till you got to the main floor, and then you turned and went up another flight of steps not so much worn, with pencil-drawings on the wall—except some woman had tried to rub them out—till you got to the top, and that was the Copus Club. It was exclusive, and you had no business there unless you belonged. I felt funny going up the steps, and had to swallow pretty often, because I had never been up there before and I knew what Pa would say if he knew where I was. But I didn't care what Pa thought. He was too old-fashioned for me; he needn't expect me to stay at home all the time and pray.

Pausing before the double doors I listened, with my mouth open and my heart beating fast, as if I was listening to a doctor tell a woman what was wrong with her. Somebody was playing a piano and I could hear them counting and moving something.

I knocked and straightened up. There wasn't any use in being afraid. I had a perfect right to be there—the president of the club had invited me to come as his special friend. I wouldn't be meek and scary voiced. I would hold up my head and conduct myself as a member of the Copus Club should. I wasn't a member yet, but if I made a good showing at the shindig I probably would be. Merle Sewell had as good as told me that.

The doorkeeper in uniform wasn't there. When I thought of it I knew that he wouldn't be standing around outside all the time like a soldier, expecting somebody to break in every moment. People knew

BOONE STOP

better than that. He was probably inside. Knocking, I stepped back and put my heels together. When he came to the door I would say: "My name is Seed. I am Merle Sewell's friend." That would be all I would have to say and then he would step aside and say, "Very well, sir."

But no one came. The counting went on and they kept on with the moving. There wasn't any reason why I shouldn't knock good and hard—I was Merle Sewell's friend and had a right to be there. So I gave it a good lick. Open the door flew and Charley Colden stood before me. I saw that he was the doorkeeper; nobody but Charley Colden. It wasn't a general or anything that way—just Charley Colden. Lots of times things aren't as scary after you get the door open as you think they are going to be. Charley was not much on personal appearance. One side of the buttonhole in his shirt-collar was torn out so that the button made the other side sag down, and he didn't pay much attention to what he got on his shirt-front.

"I just came up awhile. I'm Merle Sewell's friend."

Charley shut the door after me as if he had just let the cat out. It didn't seem to impress him so much whose friend I was.

A girl with her hat on was playing the piano, and Miss Hartwig was in the middle of the floor, holding the hands of a man who had his coat off.

"Don't watch your feet. Look at me," she said to him. "One, two, one, two—go." With that she stepped off backward and he started after her.

The man's feet was what I had heard being moved.

BOONE STOP

His hands gripped hers and his face looked as if he was going to a hospital.

"Limber up a bit," said Miss Hartwig and gave him a little jerk. It was a pretty good jerk, because she was built for jerking. She was tall and large and ought to have worked at something where she could have used her arms. "Don't look as if you were dying and don't hold me so tight. I'm not going to run away. Now again. One, two, one, two—go."

Things did not look as grand as I had imagined. The blinds were pulled down, and at one end of the room there was a picture of George Washington and at the other two flags crossed, with tassels on one like a lodge flag, and in the middle of the room were two iron posts to hold the ceiling up. Opening off on one side was a room that said "Parlor," but there were no rocking-chairs or albums in it, being mostly mirrors and powder spilled on the floor.

"Could I do anything for you?" asked Miss Hartwig.

"I'm Merle Sewell's friend. He said that you could teach me how to dance," I said, while the girl at the piano turned open a novel to where her handkerchief was and began to read. Being in a dance-hall didn't seem as exciting as I thought it would be.

"Any experience?"

"No."

"Do you just want to learn to dance or do you want to be a graceful and accomplished dancer?" she asked, polishing her nail on her palm.

I saw what to answer. By the way she asked it I knew what she would think of a person who simply

BOONE STOP

wanted to learn to dance. One might just as well not know how to dance as not to be a graceful and accomplished dancer.

"That's what I want to be—a graceful and accomplished dancer," I said.

Being a graceful and accomplished dancer—that was what made the ladies love and respect you. It was getting so these days that a man had to be able to do a lot of things to make a girl love and respect him. In Pa's day all he had to do was to court the girl a few times and give her some cinnamon bark, but now it was different. There was more competition now. Unless you were a graceful and accomplished dancer you didn't stand much of a show.

"That will be three dollars more."

I wished then that I had asked about the price. It was going to cost a good deal of money to be a society man. I saw that.

"All right, Ollie," said Miss Hartwig, when we were ready to dance. "Give us a little tumpy-tump."

Miss Hartwig knew how to dance all right. Before she had taken up dancing she had worked in the halter-factory and she wasn't afraid to use her strength. "Put your arm around me and just think of the music," she said. But she didn't say it as if it was anything. "Put your arm around me," she said, as if she was just asking somebody to pass the toothpicks. You would have thought she would have been excited and hung her head, but she didn't. She wasn't even looking at me; she had got something in her tooth and was taking it out.

I wasn't going to let her see that I thought it was

BOONE STOP

anything to put my arm around a girl. If she didn't think anything about it, then I wouldn't either. I would show her that I was hardened.

"Sure, I will." That was the way Merle would have talked. "Then what do I do?"

"Then you do this way," she said, and pulled up her skirts and moved her feet. I didn't look at anything except her feet. I'd let her see that such things didn't mean anything to me. But I was glad Gran'ma wasn't there.

"Get the music running through your head and when I pull down on your arm shove out your foot."

I put my arm about her and let it rest there, but it wasn't much fun. I had always thought that the moment you put your arm around a girl you would feel dizzy. But I didn't. It might just as well have been Mid.

"One, two, one, two—go." With that she flopped her elbows and started off. "No," said Miss Hartwig, firmly, when we had got around, "you've never had any experience. You told me the truth about that. But I have had some pretty tough cases in my time. I'm not afraid of anything. Now," she said, when the lesson was over, "you come back Wednesday evening and we'll go on with it. Keep saying over and over to yourself, 'one, two, one, two,' and pretty soon you'll get the hang of it."

When I got back Pa was sitting in the parlor, reading the Bible, but he didn't ask me where I had been. He didn't any more. He just followed me with his eyes as if I was the erring one of the family and that he had done all he could. The Lord knew that. It was a good thing he didn't ask

BOONE STOP

me. If he had he would have found out something. I had my answer all ready for him.

Wednesday night it was different. That was prayer-meeting night. I didn't think about it till we were at the supper-table, and then when I saw Pa with his best Sunday suit on and Ma with her black dress on and Gran'ma with the lace at her throat I remembered it. Prayer-meeting nights came around fast. One prayer-meeting would just be over when I would go down-town to the candy-kitchen or drop in to see Red Milligan, and it would be prayer-meeting night again. There was nobody to talk to at the prayer-meetings—just old folks. They would sing and pray and then say a few words about the weather and go home.

"You haven't on your other suit," said Pa, laying his knife and fork parallel. "Don't you know what night this is?"

Mid had on his suit and his hair brushed, but Mid wasn't living. He didn't know how to play pool and had never had any experiences with women.

"I don't feel very well," I said, and put my knife on my plate. I wished that I had thought about it and stopped before. I put my hand to my head and moved it around kind of indefinite and closed my eyes.

"He has been working hard, Isom," said Gran'ma. "The mine is hard on the boy."

I saw that it was. I hadn't thought of it before, but now I saw that the mine was hard on me.

Pa blew his breath through his nostrils. "It seems to me that your illnesses are usually confined to prayer-meeting nights."

BOONE STOP

"Yes, he was sick two weeks ago to-night," said Mid, politely. That was the way he always acted. Not as if it was against me, but as if he was saying something to be nice. I knew how I would get even with him. I would hide my razor.

"So I remember," said Pa. "I think he will go." With that he got up and, going in the sitting-room, picked up the zinc paper as if all had been said.

"I think he will not," I said, but I didn't say it out loud. I just said it to myself.

Going out on the porch I sat down, but I didn't put my feet on the railing. "Ma," I called, "this railing is getting all dirty. It's a shame for us to put our feet on it the way we do."

But Pa didn't pay any attention.

When Ozy came Pa shook hands with him as if he was a preacher, and in a few minutes they were talking about the Bible. Ozy was so interested in talking about it that he just said good evening when Susie came out, and went on talking for several minutes. Then he came over and sat down on the steps by Susie. She didn't have much to say; she just looked at him with her big eyes and laughed when he did and pinched her dress into wrinkles. Ozy knew more to talk about than Susie did.

"Cleveland, you are not dressed," said Pa to me, changing his tone. He always changed his tone when he spoke to me.

He could talk to Ma and Gran'ma and to the rest of them without dropping his voice, but when he spoke to me it was in a different way. I wasn't like the rest of them; I was always about to do something I shouldn't.

BOONE STOP

"That's right, get in your glad rags," said Ozy, and Susie laughed.

It didn't seem very funny to me, but anything Ozy said seemed funny to Susie, and Pa kind of smiled, too. After I was gone Pa would say something funny, too; but not while I was there. I could not be joked with. I had to be counseled and guided.

Pulling off my shirt, I threw it on the floor and kicked it under the bed. I would act that way when I was by myself and would say things just so they could hear me talking but not know what I was saying. I was braver when I was alone than when I was with Pa. Then I kicked my pants into the corner and threw the match on the floor. I didn't care who had to pick it up. And then I kicked the chair out of the way. I had to kick something. I wouldn't have cared if it had been Mid.

I looked out the window. I could catch hold of the sill and drop down and when they came up I would not be there. But I knew I wouldn't. I knew I was going to prayer-meeting. Pa was getting the best of me this evening, but he wouldn't the next time. I was sure of that. I would go this evening, but the next time—that would be different.

But I didn't put on my Sunday suit. I put on my Hoehn clothes and I didn't comb my hair. Pa could make me go to prayer-meeting, but I wouldn't comb my hair. I mussed it up worse and took a long time about coming down.

They were all waiting, Ma with her little black bonnet and Gran'ma with her gold breastpin at her throat. Pa and Ma were ahead, with Susie and

BOONE STOP

Ozy next. Gran'ma, with Mid beside her, waited for me to come up, but I got on the other side from Mid.

I didn't look at Pa while he led the prayer-meeting. I looked out the window most of the time, and when he said we will now kneel in prayer and when the rest of them got down on their knees and put their faces in the seats, I didn't. I just bowed my head and thought about other things. It was getting harder and harder for Gran'ma to get down on her knees, and when she did sometimes you could hear them pop. I couldn't make mine pop, but I could snap my big toe. Ozy got down on his knees farther than any of them and put his face in the seat behind him, but while Pa was praying I heard something rustle and I looked, and sure enough Ozy had something in his hand, reading. When he went to shut it up as Pa was saying Amen I saw that it was an advertising book. Ozy had his thumb over the title, but I could see the author's name—"Old Dr. Grindle."

When I got home I didn't sit in the parlor and help entertain Ozy. Instead of that I went straight up-stairs and slammed the door behind me. Pa had got the best of me this evening, but he wouldn't the next time.

XI

I go to the Copus Club ball in one of Mr. Pliss's dress suits and charm the ladies.

BEING in society had its troubles; I began to see that. There were so many things to think of, and when you told a lady good night should you shake hands with her or just tip your hat and walk off?

It didn't seem to make any difference how far along in life you got, there was always something to worry about. No sooner had I found out whether the gentleman should get out of the buggy first than I had to worry about whether to shake hands or just to tip your hat and walk off. I would be glad when I got to be like Mrs. Potter Palmer.

What should I talk about while taking the lady of my choice to the dance? Not about gamblers nor the quickest way to kill a man. You had to talk about educated things to make them love and respect you. I used to think whistling like a train and turning cart-wheels made them love and respect you, but now I saw it didn't. That was one of the advantages in growing up to be a man. You knew so much more about the world and the gentle sex.

Finding something to talk about wasn't easy.

BOONE STOP

Pa's Gettysburg books didn't help much, nor Ma's *Truthful and Convincing Incidents of Remarkable Answers to Prayer*. I began to wish that I hadn't spent so much time reading Indian books and about the Dalton boys. They were no good to me now. Cleo wouldn't be interested in knowing, if you buried a family in a well and filled it up with dirt, that you would have to be careful about the dirt settling, or that you couldn't always depend on lime to eat up bones, and especially joints, but I kept right on reading. The only way to get anything done is to keep right at it. I have found that out.

One day when I got down to the bottom of an article I knew that I had found what I wanted. It was an educated article telling how scientists thought that the world would come to an end. It said that one body of scientists and learned men thought that the sun was growing colder and gradually going out, so that after a while there would be nothing to keep the people on the earth warm, so that after a time everybody would die of extreme cold.

"On the other hand," the article went on to say, "another group of equally learned scientists hold that mundane destruction will be from another source." By mundane it meant of or pertaining to the earth; earthly. These scientists, it said, held that ice was gradually accumulating at the North Pole, and that after a while there would be so much there that the earth would suddenly lose its balance and everything would fly off. Then it told how many years it would take.

It was an educated subject and one that anybody

BOONE STOP

would be interested in. You couldn't help being interested—especially if the second group of scientists had miscalculated a little. There wasn't another person in Boone Stop who could talk about such a subject. She would see that I was different from other men. I might go to the same dance and partake of the same refreshments, but between them and me there was an immense gulf. She would see that.

That was a good subject to discuss on the way to the dance, but I must have something to talk about on the way back. Something light and amusing, but dignified—not just what poison would work quickest, or which one of Lutgert's wife's bones they found in the soap-vat, or how to dislocate a man's neck with one blow, but something that would bring a smile of amusement. It would balance up with the serious talk. That was what they liked—something solid and serious and then something light and amusing. That was the way to handle them.

But that was hard to find. There was plenty of educated reading that I could talk about, but not very much that was amusing yet dignified. At last in a stack of old copies of *The Ram's Horn* on a broken-legged chair in the spare bedroom I found what I wanted. The pieces seemed to be especially written for easy remembering and telling to other people, and were dignified and funny in a solemn way, like what girls would want.

They were easy to remember because they all started about alike:

“An amusing story is related of Bishop X——

BOONE STOP

of the Diocese of Z——, whose knowledge of the Scriptures is equaled only by his absent-mindedness." All you had to do was look up how to pronounce Diocese.

Another good one began:

"It is told that on a certain occasion the Right Reverend Y—— at the Archbishoprick of Mysore, India, found to cross a certain river on his ministerial rounds that he would have to remove his trousers in order to ford the well-nigh impassable stream."

I would not begin my easy, conversational style until we were out on the street. Looking up at the stars, I would say something about them and she would say something back, and then I would say how far off they seemed and then she would say, after all, how small the world is.

"Yes, and it is just one out of a million up there," I would say, lifting my hand to the starry vault. "And some day it will all come to an end. Did you ever stop to think as to the probable end of the world?"

"No," she would say, dropping her voice as the immensity of the idea dawned on her and drawing a little closer for protection.

Then I would clear my throat and begin. I might play pool, but I thought about the serious things of life.

"Another group of equally learned scientists, however, hold that mundane destruction will be from another source. Ice is slowly accumulating at the North Pole which at some future date will violently displace the earth from its accustomed orbit."

BOONE STOP

Then I would picture the world whizzing through space and everything sliding off it till she got serious and solemn, and then I would make her laugh by telling her of Bishop X—— of the Diocese of Z——. That was the way to win them; be serious and thoughtful awhile, then light and amusing. That was a lot better than giving them Kis-Me chewing-gum and talking about osculation.

I couldn't see what she saw in Dale Carnagey, who was always hanging around and showing her how he could wiggle his ears and stretch out his chewing-gum. It made me sick to think of men who tried to charm the opposite sex by purely physical attractions. That would do for girls like Veve, but not for educated ladies like Miss Chambers. They could go ahead and cultivate moving their ears and learning funny things out of Hostetter's if they wanted to, but as for myself I would go ahead and enrich my mind.

I would do whatever I made up my mind to do. I saw that. I was getting to be a good pool-player. "Just keep up your practising," said Red. "That's all you need—just practice. Come in whenever you can." If I could learn to play pool I could learn to enrich my mind. I didn't let on, but I was beginning to find out that I was pretty smart. It didn't take me long in talking to old people to see that I was smarter than they were.

"How'd you like to tear off one?" I said to Merle Sewell one day at Red's.

"Don't mind. Got any cabbage leaves, Red? By the way," he said, as he was chalking up, "I guess you got your boiled shirt and everything?"

BOONE STOP

I saw it all in a flash: at a Copus Club shindig you had to wear a white shirt—not just an ordinary striped shirt with a tie that fastened over the collar-button. I hadn't thought of that, but I wouldn't let on.

"Sure," I said. "Got a couple of them. Always keep them around. You never know when they're going to come in handy."

"That's right," said Red Milligan, hitching up his trousers. "You never know when you're going to need them. A fellow really needs two." Red Milligan could talk about anything. Red knew all about hard-boiled shirts. It was too bad that he was held down by his wife. "Yes," he said, "there's nothing looks sweller than a hard-boiled shirt with a white tie, and cuffs sticking out a little ways. I always found a good way to make your cuffs stick out was to put on two cuff-holders—one through the hole and fasten it to the sleeve and the other on the front. That holds the cuffs steady, except, of course, you always got to watch that your coat-sleeve don't get to riding. I always look in the mirror when I go past, to see that everything is all right."

I began to be haunted by a vague fear. It was going to take more preparation and cost more for that night than I had thought.

"When you set down, that's the time you got to be careful about. That's when you can tell if they are a gentleman or a fake. The way to set down like a gentleman is to walk up to a chair, lightly chatting with your lady, and then carefully pick up your coattails and let them fall on each side of you,

BOONE STOP

this way." Pulling up his coat, Red walked over to a pool-chair, lightly chatting with an imaginary lady, and, waving her to a chair next to his, lifted up his coat and carefully placed himself on the outer edge of the chair.

But coattails? What did they mean by coattails?

"You can spot a fellow as not knowing anything about 'em if he comes swinging up to a chair and sets down on his coattails and has to pull them out from under him this way." It did look ridiculous the way Red walked up to a chair, throwing out his feet as if he had walked on plowed ground all his life, and almost fell off his chair before he got his coattails pulled out.

They couldn't say that about me. I would know how to sit down when I got among the ladies. I made up my mind to that.

"Do you believe in having braid or not?" asked Merle, as one expert testing another.

"Yes, all things considered," said Red, weighing the question. When you asked Red a question you could depend on him for a thoughtful answer. "It makes a dress-suit look more bon-ton."

Dress-suit! Red was showing how you ought to pick up a lady's handkerchief and smile as you handed it to her, but I didn't pay any attention. How could I get a dress-suit? I would have to have one. I couldn't get out of it now. I wouldn't go at all if I couldn't go like a gentleman. But how was I to get the money?

The world was so full of trouble. If it wasn't one thing it was another. Hard-boiled shirts and now a

BOONE STOP

dress-suit. No wonder you were always reading about society women breaking down.

I went home, but I didn't sleep much. Why couldn't a man be attractive to the ladies in his shirt-sleeves? Would everybody have to have dress-suits? I would ask Red. But I wouldn't ask him straight out; I would lead up to it.

"Red," I said, the next evening, "suppose a lady drops her handkerchief and you don't know it. Is she expected to tell you she has or just go along till you notice she hasn't got one?"

"That depends," said Red, pushing his thumb under his belt—"that depends a great deal on how well the lady knows you. If you have been out with her several times and she feels purty well acquainted it's all right for her to say: 'I seem to have lost my handkerchief. It is very careless of me. Would you mind looking for it?' On the other hand, if the lady don't know you very well she will wait awhile for you to notice, and then if you don't she will begin to look around. Then you step up and say, 'Beg pardon, but can I be of any service?' When you hand it to her she thanks you and you bow and say, 'The pleasure is mine.'"

There wasn't anything Red hadn't thought out.

"By the way," I said, as if I had just thought of it, "where do the poor people get their dress-suits? I have often wondered."

"They don't get 'em. That's the beauty of going to a function where they all got dress-suits—you know then everybody is of your station."

"But I mean people who just go once in a while?"

Red kind of laughed through his nose. "They

BOONE STOP

go around to some lousy second-hand shop and rent them." It was plain to be seen what Red thought of that class of people. He wouldn't soil his hands with them.

"I don't suppose anybody in Boone Stop has them. Do you?"

"I guess old Bill Pliss handles 'em. You can get anything there from a bladder to a balloon."

William Pliss, New and Second Hand Store, had his place down past the jail by the halter-factory. You couldn't go down that way without seeing it; he kept most of it setting out on the sidewalk while he leaned back against the door-jamb in a chair that had the bottom covered with papers. When you wanted to buy anything he would follow you around over the store, once in a while yawning and tapping his spectacles on their tin case.

"Sure," I said, and kind of laughed through my nose, too. "Nobody who was anybody would buy anything from him. I just happened to think of it. That was the reason I asked."

William Pliss did keep what Red said, but it seemed mostly to run to the former. Two colored men were leaving when I arrived, but they didn't seem to have bought anything. I guess they must have found the prices too high. Mr. Pliss took off his glasses and folded them up without much enthusiasm.

I would not ask him about a dress-suit the first thing. I would ask him about something else, and then kind of happen to think of it and say that I might look at it if he had it handy.

"Got any gloves?"

BOONE STOP

"Plain or fancy?"

"Pigskin, for working in the mines."

"Second counter to the left." He was not a man to waste words.

I turned through the gloves; some of them were curled up and bent to the hand from long use and some were moldy from having been too long at the bottom of the pile, but I wasn't thinking of them. I was thinking how I could lead up to the dress-suit. I couldn't see any place where he would be apt to keep fashionable men's suits. The store ran mostly to rolls of linoleum and to mattresses with a good many of the leather strengtheners missing.

"By the way," I said, casually, "have you any dress-suits?"

"Rear of store, behind prescription screen."

In the mirror of the prescription screen I could see Mr. Pliss following me, stopping to push in the bureau drawers and to wet his thumbs and rub the scratched places on the dining-room tables. The prescription screen was for anybody who wanted to start a drug-store in a dry town.

There wasn't anything behind the screen, but a curtain on a wire was stretched along the wall. A good many of the rings were missing, so that when Mr. Pliss pulled the curtain back he had to be careful. Putting his hand under a hanger, he slipped off the coat and pulled out the trousers in one motion.

The suit was not very new. The other people who had used it had seemed to sweat a good deal and to get their cuffs caught in the lining.

"There's a chair," said Mr. Pliss, swinging back

BOONE STOP

his leg without looking behind him. "You can see yourself in the mirror."

On the floor was a strip of oilcloth to stand on, and by looking at it you could tell how big their table had been. I started to unlace my shoes and then stopped. When Mr. Pliss saw me hesitate he walked away. He had fine feeling. He knew how poorly they made socks these days. When he came back I had my suit on.

"It's all right except you'll have to pull the collar up once in a while," said Mr. Pliss. "I'll sponge off the lapel. The last time it was out it was to a wedding dinner."

It looked pretty well, especially when I kept one shoulder higher than the other, but not as fine as a store dummy. No difference how you tried, you couldn't look as elegant as a store dummy.

"How much is it?"

"Two dollars. Vests extra."

I hadn't thought about that. There was always something else—white shirt, white tie, dress-suit, white vest. A dress-suit wasn't a suit; it was just a coat and a pair of pants.

"How much for a vest?" I asked, kind of hesitating as, if he didn't make it pretty reasonable, I wouldn't take it.

"Fifty cents." Reaching up on the shelf, Mr. Pliss lifted up a paper and hung a row of white vests on his arm. "Flowers is nice," said Mr. Pliss, holding out a vest that had plenty of flowers on it.

The company that had made it hadn't spared expense on flowers. Some of the other vests seemed

BOONE STOP

to have a good many flowers, but none of them had as many or as big flowers as this one.

"Nice rich color in them. If you're any judge of fancy vests you can see that for yourself," he said, picking up a stick and pulling the chain on the gas-lamp. The light went on with a *plop* and I could see that he was right.

"It's a good color, all right," I said, "but it's kind of bright in spots." That would show him that I was a judge of fancy vests. I had admitted what he had said, and then had pointed out something he hadn't seen. He'd have to respect me now.

"Not when you get a white shirt above it."

I mustn't give in too easy. "Don't you think the vest's a little too long?" I said, holding up my pants with one hand and letting my other hand fall into an easy, natural position, like a store dummy.

"That's easy fixed," said Mr. Pliss, reaching inside his clothes and bringing out a safety pin. Gathering up the vest behind my neck, he fastened the pin and pushed the puckered part out of sight. "I don't want anybody to go out of this store unless they are satisfied," he said, scratching a bit of wedding-egg off a flower. "That's the way I have built up my business—everybody satisfied or they don't need take it."

"Could I dress here Monday evening and leave my things till after the dance? I'd like to take the suit if I had some place to dress," I finished, kind of thoughtfully.

"I guess so. You can push the bell and I'll come down and let you in. If you don't hear me coming down pretty soon you can push it again."

BOONE STOP

After having the dress-suit on, my clothes did seem kind of solemn-looking. The flowers did make a difference. They livened things up.

Out on the sidewalk, I glanced up and down the street to see if anybody was looking. But the only people on the street were some shovelers from the Never Fail south of town, and a few men from the halter-factory. No society people.

"Good night," I said.

"Will you take your gloves now or leave them till the next time?"

I had forgotten about them. "Now," I said and broke a dollar.

I didn't eat very much the night of the dance, just looking up when they passed something and wondering how I could get the educated conversation started. But I didn't get much of a chance to start the conversation.

Mr. Chambers was sitting on the porch, reading a funny magazine. "Look who's here," he said, calling Cleo and getting up and shaking hands. "White shirt, white tie, white cuffs, and everything. This does remind me of old times." He stopped and fastened his eye on my middle. "My God! boy, where did you get that vest? By gicks!" he said, snapping his fingers, "this is great! I can remember as if it was yesterday the first time I ever took a girl out in a dress-suit. There was only one man in our town who had a dress-suit, and I went to him and borrowed it. You ought to have seen how it fit." Claspings his hands together, Mr. Chambers leaned back against the door-jamb, while his stomach went up and down as he remembered. "I could have

BOONE STOP

carried a sofa cushion round my waist and no one would have known it. And you ought to have seen my vest. It was a creamy, pale, sickly yellow—not flowers, you know—but like something had been spilled on it and never all wiped off. We were having some soft-boiled eggs served in those fashionable egg-holders and I was trying to get mine open and talk to a pretty girl at the same time. You know what that is.” I hadn’t thought of it before, but by the way Mr. Chambers’s stomach went up and down I saw that it must be lots of fun. “I kept pecking and pecking away at the egg with my knife, but it wouldn’t break, and then I hit it a good smash and it went right on through. Did you ever have a knife go too far into an egg? Well, you ought to some time. I looked down in my lap and thought it had just gone on my napkin, and so I folded it up and wiped my fingers and made out it wasn’t anything, the way a fellow will, you know, and after a while I got up and started to dance with my girl, and where do you think that egg was? By gicks! it was all over her dress!” Snapping his fingers, Mr. Chambers threw his head back and laughed louder than ever at the recollection of it. It did seem kind of funny, but not funny enough to laugh at the way Mr. Chambers did. “By gicks!” he said, fastening his eye on my middle again, “that vest of yours reminds me of it!”

Mr. Chambers followed me with his eyes, once in a while snapping his fingers and saying something about gicks. Mr. Chambers was a nice man and I liked him, but I did wish that every time I came

BOONE STOP

around he could think of something besides how he used to court a girl.

Cleo was dressed elegantly. She had on a white dress with lace on it, and something over her head and around her shoulders, and a handkerchief. She seemed more like a stranger. But I didn't let on; I just looked straight ahead and kept my thumbs on my pants seams, like Red had said. When a girl is dressed up fine that way, you mustn't pretend to notice how she looks. Just go ahead and talk educated—that's the way to win them. A person has to live a long time to handle women. I've found that out. You're not born to it, like wrestling or fighting. You have to acquire it.

When Cleo spoke to anybody I would lift my hand up, take off my hat and bring it down to a level with my eyes and then put it back on again, and then let my hand fall naturally and gracefully back into position.

I was glad, as we went along the street, that I was not like some people we met. They didn't have any manners at all. They would speak to Cleo, fasten their eyes on me, and then they wouldn't any more than get past before they would blow through their nose and giggle. I had never noticed before what poor manners the average person had. I would ask Red if he had noticed it.

I cleared my throat to get ready to talk educated, but before I could get started Cleo began to talk about just things and people in Boone Stop—if Bert Cooper and Bertha Nelson had made it up, and why Bess Crane had gone to Kansas City, and if I had seen Jay Mutz since he had had his head

BOONE STOP

shaved, and if I had noticed the way the new South Methodist preacher was walking home with Grace Langan.

I saw why she was doing it. She thought I was like the other boys in Boone Stop; she didn't know that I could talk educated. I would show her. I would point to a star and begin.

"If there was a star up there," I said, pointing to the heavens, "did you ever think how far it would be and how insignificant, after all, the earth is?"

"Why, what made you think of that?"

"I just happened to. Did you ever stop to think how the world is coming to an end? Well, there are two theories. As is generally recognized, the sun is growing cooler, and some day all animal and vegetable matter will freeze to death."

"Father thinks the winters are growing colder, too," agreed Cleo. "I've heard him say that lots of times."

"While, on the other hand, another group of equally learned scientists hold—"

Cleo bent forward in the excitement of discovery. "Oh, look—look at Will Sawyers holding May Corwin's hand. I think he is too silly for anything."

It seemed to me Cleo ought to have been more interested in this when it meant so much to her and to everybody in the world.

"—hold that mundane destruction will be from another source. Mundane means of or pertaining to the earth; earthly, you know."

I put in the you know so that she wouldn't feel bad because she didn't know what it was. That sort of made it sound as if we were talking about it to-

BOONE STOP

gether and I just happened to know what it meant and she didn't, but pretty soon she might know what something else meant that I didn't and then she would tell me and not think anything about it. That was the way I wanted it to sound.

"And she isn't much better. Look at her—"

"These scientists hold that ice is slowly accumulating at—"

"There's Charley Finnel with Fannie Hall. Do you really believe that she slapped him in the face?"

"No," I said, and went on, "—at the North Pole and after a while there will be so much there that—"

"So much what?"

"So much ice," I said.

"Oh yes, ice—ice at the North Pole. Please go on. What happened then?"

"Nothing happened. It hasn't happened yet."

"When will it happen?"

Why wouldn't she pay attention, and especially when no difference what she did she couldn't keep it from happening?

"I don't know," I said, kind of throaty. "That is just the point. It may happen any day. It may happen to- —"

"Oh, good evening, Mrs. Ellison! Tell Susie I found it between the cracks. Please go on now. I'm awfully interested."

"—morrow. When too much has accumulated there the earth will suddenly—"

"Too much what, Cleve? Excuse me, I didn't hear. I was looking to see what Dora Estes had on. She wears her *crêpe de Chine* everywhere she goes.

BOONE STOP

Please go on—you have such an interesting way of telling things."

"Ice. Too much ice."

"Of course. How silly of me not to remember. Who was it said this?"

"Nobody," I said, coldly. "Just some scientists." There wasn't any use in going on with that. I would try something light and amusing. I walked a ways till she was listening good, and then cleared my throat.

"An amusing story is related of Bishop X——"

"X—— what?"

She couldn't understand. Girls were not as smart as I thought they were. "Just X——. That's all. Just Bishop X——."

"Who related it?"

I brought up my hands from the seam and dropped them hopelessly; that would show that if she was listening she would find out. She ought to know when anybody was going to tell anything interesting.

"This amusing story is related of Bishop X—— of the Diocese of Z——"

"What's a diocese?"

I could tell her. She would have to respect me. "It's where the church is and the people who belong to it."

"Where is this Z——?"

I saw it wasn't any use in trying to be light and amusing. I walked along in silence, and then Cleo began to talk, and pretty soon I was talking, too. It wasn't about anything much—just things we knew about and how silly Dan McFarland acted around the girls and if I thought Fred Harvey would ever

BOONE STOP

marry—but it was pretty interesting. I was beginning to learn things about girls; you had to keep studying them all the time. You didn't have to talk about the world coming to an end to make it interesting. You could talk just about small things and they would seem interesting.

Then we were there. Charley Colden was standing outside the door with his uniform on and looking mighty grand. You wouldn't think that he drove an express wagon and hauled hides unless you knew it. Around the top of the stairs and hanging on the iron fire-ladder that went up through the trap-door to the roof were a lot of boys, with their mouths open, trying to look through the door into the Club, but Charley Colden didn't let them. Not much. Every time a couple went in Charley slammed the door behind them as if they were the king and queen.

There were flowers around George Washington's picture and bunting around the iron posts. Magruder's Five-piece Orchestra was tuning up and the ladies were coming out of the parlor, shaking down their skirts, and the boys were walking past the looking-glass on the wall and trying to think of something to say. It's mighty hard to be looking at what somebody else has on and to try to think of something to say at the same time. Boys I had known pretty well now seemed more like strangers, and especially with my face feeling funny after being shaved by a barber.

When the orchestra struck up I walked up to Cleo and got out my handkerchief. I was glad Red had told me. Girls judge men by such little things. My throat seemed dry and I tried to smile, but it was

BOONE STOP

hard work. It didn't seem right walking up to Cleo and putting my arm around her, but the rest of them were doing it, so I went ahead, and when I got it done once it wasn't anything more than putting on my pants. Nodding my head to the music, I kind of swayed and waited till a good place in the music came along, and then I moved my left foot backward and dragged Cleo after me. It was mighty hard work to do it without looking at your feet and trying to think of something to say. Cleo wasn't as good a dancer as Miss Hartwig was. Miss Hartwig was more commanding. She took hold of you and pushed you around where you ought to go, but Cleo didn't. She just followed along and smiled pleasantly when anybody bumped into us.

Dancing with her wasn't as much fun as I thought. I thought that the moment you took a girl's hand in yours and started off down the floor you would feel happy. But I didn't. There were too many things to think about, with everybody running into you, and slipping on the candle-scrappings, and trying to see if your collar was all right when you passed the looking-glass. Putting your arms around them didn't seem much different than putting your arms around a boy, except, of course, you had to hold on lighter and no slapping on the back. It seemed that way at first, but after we got going good and I didn't have to think so much about my feet, I saw that dancing with a girl was lots better. No more putting arms around boys for me. To think of putting my arms around Mid made me sick. Especially once in a while when Cleo's hair would blow across my face. That was different.

BOONE STOP

The more I danced the better I liked it, and it wasn't so hard to think of something to say when we got going good. Sometimes I didn't want to think of anything to say; I just wanted to dance on and on, like reading poetry. After a while, when I didn't feel so dry around the mouth, I began to think of funny things to say. I'm pretty good at that when I get started. All the girls would laugh, and then I would say something else, and then everybody would laugh again. The more funny things I said the more I could think of, and pretty soon I began to see that I was the hit of the evening. Nobody could say anything but what I would say something back, sharp and quick, and it was always funny. The more I danced the more fancy steps I could put in, and come out with the proper foot every time. I would rise up and come down and never feel a bit tired, so that all the lady had to do was to hang on. When I got to going fast and got to sweating a little, a girl couldn't mention anything that I couldn't find something funny to say right back without any waiting. It didn't seem like the same place. I didn't notice any more where the bunting on the iron posts had slipped down, nor the loose board in the floor down by the piano, nor anything. I just seemed to be floating along, and all the girls looking up into my face and laughing. I had solved the secret of making myself attractive to the opposite sex.

Taking Cleo home, I could think of still more funny things to say. There wasn't any end to them. Cleo and Bess Crane laughed all the way. I would say a few words and then they would laugh. I was like chain lightning. I could take it out of

BOONE STOP

another person's mouth and say it while somebody else was getting ready.

At the door I didn't think anything about how I would tell her good night. I just said something, and she laughed, and I lifted my hat and brought it down to a level with my eyes, and walked down the steps backward and kept bowing and making fun, and she stood there laughing till I was clear out on the sidewalk.

I knew I had been a success. I would always be a success like that. When a person could interest ladies the way I had to-night he didn't have to talk about the world coming to an end.

"By gicks!" I said to myself, "I certainly did make a hit." Snapping my fingers like Mr. Chambers, I scooted my feet along on the walk, just to see how it was, after all, that I had put in all those extra steps.

Hearing something move, I looked up, and a figure stepped from behind a tree and stood before me. It just stood there, tall and square-shouldered, without saying a word. It was Pa.

His hands were clenched and he looked at me as he had at the railroad men. I could not see his eyes, but I could feel them. Out of me began to flow the spirit of lightness and exaltation that I had been living in all evening, and I felt my eyes lowering.

"That I should live to see this day," he said, as if talking to the Lord. "In mine own house. And in the clothes of the devil. Why hast Thou seen fit to send me these trials and tribulations? But Thou shalt not find me wanting." When he spoke again it was to me. "Come, we shall go home."

BOONE STOP

Side by side we walked, Pa with his head high and his hands down at his side, as if he was going up after the communion-cup. So stiff and straight did he walk that his rheumatism limp hardly showed, except when there was a high place in the sidewalk and his heel caught. But he didn't seem to notice, nor mind meeting people.

At Buchanan Street I made as if to turn off, so we wouldn't have to go down Main Street, but Pa kept straight ahead.

"Thou mayest sin in darkness, but in the market-place it shall be known."

Through the lighted street we kept, past No. 9, past the Commercial House, past Hoehn's, the Quality Store, Pa never turning his head to see who was looking. As we were passing Red Milligan's the door was being shoved to and kicked at the bottom to make it fit. Red was going home.

"Hello, old sport!" said Red, running his hand down his key-chain till he got hold of the bunch, and raising up his coattail to drop them in his pocket. "Was you the belle of the ball?"

What would Red think of me now—the man I had told that Pa could not sit on me? With his hand still under the tail of his coat he stood staring at us. What would he tell the other fellows?

"Sure," I said.

But it didn't sound much like talking to a man of the world, with no cuss words or anything in it. As I said it I tried to smile and make out as if walking with Pa wasn't anything, but as Red shifted his feet so he could follow us with his eyes as we went past I knew that he would never respect me again. I

BOONE STOP

couldn't go with anybody now except Sunday-school boys and girls. Men wouldn't have anything to do with me.

"O Lord! guide me aright," said Pa.

"Drop in and tell me all about it," called Red.

"Work of the devil," said Pa, without looking around.

I straightened up. He should not talk that way about Red Milligan. Red Milligan was a smart man and knew lots of things Pa didn't. Red wasn't any more a work of the devil than I was—and I wasn't bad. I was just as good as Mid. Pa never talked that way about Mid. Just because he sat around home and let Ma wait on him and went to prayer-meeting they thought he was perfect. I would show Pa that he couldn't sit on me any longer.

"He's not." It was out before I thought. At first it didn't seem to be me saying it. When it was out I felt myself tingling all over. "I've said it," I kept saying to myself over and over. "I've said it and I'm going to stick by it. I don't care what he does, I'm going to stick by it." Then I heard myself saying aloud, "He isn't and you needn't say that he is."

Abruptly Pa stopped and faced me under a street lamp, his back straightening and his head lifting. Hazelnuts began to come and go in his jaws. "What is that you say?" he demanded, swallowing at something that had lodged in his throat. "What is that? Are you defying me?" It was the way he had talked to the railroad men.

"I said that he wasn't a work of the devil and I won't take it back."

BOONE STOP

In through his teeth Pa drew his breath and took a step toward me. Quickly I stepped up on the curbing to be as tall as he was, and into each other's eyes we looked. My fists were doubled up and my teeth were pushing each other into the gums. If his hand went up I knew what I would do.

Slowly Pa spoke, the hazelnuts still in his jaws. "Supposing you go to him then."

"All right, I will," I said, quickly. I wished I could have said it slowly, the way Pa had, but I couldn't. Out quick and sharp it came.

Turning on my heel, I walked off and began to whistle. I would show him that he didn't mean anything to me. When I could no longer hear his rheumatism foot, I stopped whistling.

"Hello, Red!" I said, as he was throwing out a dipper of water at the town pump. "I like dancing—especially after you get warm."

Red said yes, that was right—after you got the sweat coming once, you sort of got into the swing of things and could have a lot more fun. It was a pleasure to be around Red. He always thought the way you did and talked about interesting things. Pa never agreed with me and always wanted to talk about something that nobody was interested in.

Red lowered his voice and winked. "Was the old boy kind of setting on you to-night?"

"Not much. He can't sit on me. He was out taking a walk and we just happened to be going down the street together."

"I thought maybe the way he held his head—"

"Do you think I'd let him say anything to me? Not much. I'm not that kind."

BOONE STOP

"I thought you wasn't," said Red, and touched my arm; not very much, but the way men will do when they respect and understand one another. "Well, I'll have to be hitting the hay. Going down the street?"

"Up," I said, like a man.

"See you again. So long."

"So long."

I wouldn't go home. I did not care what happened, I would not go home. Pa would see that when I said a thing I meant it. Shutting my hands till the nails hurt, I said over and over to myself that I meant it. I didn't know where I would go, but I would find some place. I wouldn't go home, if it was the last thing in the world. And then in the morning he would have to explain to Gran'ma and to Susie and the rest of them where I was. I would run away. I would go to New York. When I was rich maybe I would come back and let him show how sorry he was. But not till then. It wouldn't take me long to get rich, as smart as I was—if I could get out some place where I had a chance. All the good jobs in Boone Stop were taken, anyway.

Mr. Pliss was a sound sleeper. He could never have belonged to the volunteer fire department. But finally he came down in his bare feet, and in his underclothes with the buttons getting pretty loose.

"Young people don't think nothin' of burning the candle at both ends any more," he said, opening the door and feeling around for the gas-stick. Sitting down on the edge of the table, he pulled up one knee as high as his head and began fixing his toe-nail,

BOONE STOP

stopping now and then to yawn and say, "Oh, hum!"

"That's the reason young people don't live very long any more—they don't have no regard for the rules of health. When I was a boy nobody stayed up after ten o'clock, and now they don't think anything about midnight. Just look at the papers. What do you see? Why, people dying. Specially in the cities. But if they want to rent dress-suits it's their lookout. It ain't none of my affair. Oh, hum!"

I didn't pay much attention to what he was saying. I had other things to think of. I was thinking what Pa had said, and what I had said to him, and what I wished I had said back, and then I would have had him in a trap.

XII

I get to be a man of the world, with cigars in my pocket, and give Edna some candy. I set them up to Merle and learn how to act in No. 9.

THE first thing I thought of the next morning, at the Commercial House, when I woke up, was Pa and how old he looked and how he had gone off down the street with his head up and his back straight, but not quite able to keep the limp from showing, and I was sorry. But while I was still feeling sorry for him I remembered how I could never have any fun, and how he never spoke to me without it was to tell me I shouldn't, and what he had said about Red, and then I didn't feel sorry any more. I was glad that I had done what I had. I would never give in. I didn't care what happened, I would never go home.

I don't know why it was, but I would change my mind two or three times in a minute. I would think one thing one moment, and the next I would think something else. I woke up feeling sorry for Pa, but before I had my pants on I was telling myself that I would never go back, no difference what happened.

BOONE STOP

When I came down to breakfast a fat traveling-man was wiping his plate with his napkin and asking one of the waitresses if she wasn't lonely. When she told him no she wasn't, he said that he had never seen a place with such poor service and that the next time he came to Boone Stop he would go somewhere else. Only rich traveling-men who hired their shoes shined stayed at the Commercial House, and when they got through supper they would bring their chairs out on the sidewalk and tip them back against the iron railing across the window, and watch the girls go by. They were good judges of girls. A girl would go by and I would think she was pretty, but one of them would say, no, her shoulders are too wide, and I would see they were. Then another girl would come along, and one of the men would kind of draw in his breath and say that she was the kind of a queen to draw to, and then the rest of them would laugh. I began to see that if you wanted to be a man of the world, with four or five cigars in your pocket, you would have to learn to size up a girl and say something funny.

I had never been to the Commercial House but once before, and that was when Ma caught her heel going down cellar and Pa said that we would take our meals out for a while. When Pa bowed his head to say grace all the rest of the people in the dining-room laughed, and then Pa asked the Lord to have compassion on all those who scoff and know not what they do. Sitting at the table with him wasn't any fun. But now I was alone and could do what I wanted to. It wouldn't take me long to be a man of the world.

BOONE STOP

I wished Red or Merle or some of them would be passing just as I came out of the dining-room picking my teeth, but there wasn't anybody there, so I made my toothpick last as long as I could.

The mines looked mighty gloomy, with their high elevators covered with sheet iron and their big gray piles of tailings and the pumps always bringing up the water and not a tree in sight. The machinery would growl and strain and groan, and pretty soon up would shoot a bucket, and then the machinery would begin to purr more softly and the bucket would swing to one side; then the hoist-man sitting on his carpet-covered stool would wave his hand, and the machinery would change its tone again and up the bucket would be jerked and out would fall the rocks. Down through the crusher the rocks would start, each hopper breaking them up a bit finer until they got down to the jig; then through that and onto the sludge-table, with the fine, crushed rock going out on the tailings pile and the blende into the little green pile behind the weighing-house to be hauled away to the smelters. All you could see for miles and miles were shaft-houses standing up beside little mountains of tailings, with now and then an ugly, yawning hole where some mine had caved in, now with a fence around it to keep the people from driving off into it at night. Nobody was to be seen except morning and night when the men came slouching out of the mines on their way to the change-house, and not one of them knew how to dress. Take them to the Commercial House, and they wouldn't know how to act. I would come over there and go down in the buckets with them and do

BOONE STOP

my part at a steam-drill all day, but I really wasn't one of them. My place was in society.

Pa was coming out of the change-house with his work-clothes on. I looked at him, then turned away. He would find that when I made up my mind to a thing I meant it.

Even at the hotel, every time I heard a footstep coming down the hall I would think that it was Pa. I would jump up and light my cigarette, but it was never Pa.

One day on the street I saw Mid, and crossed over so that he would have to speak to me.

"Hello!" I said the way a man of the world would naturally speak to a boy.

But he didn't reply. He just stared at me through his glasses and passed on.

One night, when the traveling-men had quit telling stories and had gone in to write letters, I climbed over our fence and, slipping up, stood behind the maple-tree, listening to its branches scratching the weather-boarding. Under Gran'ma's window I stood, and looked up at it and remembered the time I had waited under her window at Rutherford when I had cursed God and expected to die. Gran'ma was getting older and didn't laugh very much any more, and on rainy days her lame wrist troubled her a good deal.

Gran'ma was different from Pa. She seemed to understand things better. I could tell her things and I couldn't tell Pa. The good part of the world was over for him; the present was merely hanging on and fighting the devil till Resurrection Day. He was interested only in the past; the past didn't

BOONE STOP

interest me except sometimes when Pa told how he courted Ma or how his father helped drive the Mormons out of Nauvoo.

I felt all worked up and tight, like having on Mid's suit, and then something let loose inside me and the tears came streaming out. I was glad there wasn't anybody there to see me. Specially Mid. Sometimes I kind of like to cry when I am alone, but not when anybody is around. Nor when anybody whips me. That is different.

While I was standing there I heard the front gate click. But it wasn't robbers. It was Ozy and Susie.

Inside they stopped and stood close together and looked into each other's face. But Susie seemed to be looking into his more than he was into hers. I wondered if they were going to kiss, and I began to feel tingly all over. Something told me that I ought to feel ashamed of myself for spying on my sister, but I didn't. I wanted to see—specially if they were going to kiss. My heart began to beat faster and faster. I had seen Gran'ma kiss her thousands of times and it had never made my heart beat any faster, but I was as excited as if kissing a girl myself. I had never kissed a girl in my life, but I wasn't going to put it off much longer. I would get some of that gum.

"When are you coming back?" asked Susie.

"I don't know. I'm awfully busy this week. I'll let you know."

With that Ozy hung his cane on his arm and fitted down his collar. Ozy was always well dressed. He didn't look much like the rest of them that worked

BOONE STOP

in the mines. Even when he had on his Sweet-Orrs you could see that he had more style.

"Well, I must be going. Good night," he said.

"Ozy, aren't you going—going to—?" Susie laid her hand on his arm, as if to hold him a moment longer, and looked up at him.

"Of course, little girl."

Bending over, Ozy kissed her and started down the street, swinging his cane. Susie came slowly up the walk, and at the door she turned and looked back. But Ozy did not turn around. As she went in I thought I heard her crying, but I guess I was wrong, because no girl would want to cry just after she had been kissed. She would be too happy.

I tiptoed away, leaving the limb scratching the weather-boarding, and turned in at Red Milligan's where you could always have a good time.

"Hello, old sport! Come in. Always got a place for a gentleman and a pool-player." Red knew what it took to make a gentleman.

Merle had his sleeves rolled up, with a lump on his breast where his chewing-gum was. "I always carry it with me," he said one day. "You never know when you're going to need it."

"Still living at the Constitutional House?" asked Red, passing a lot of other men to sit beside me. Red could always think of more funny things to call a place.

"Sure. At the Constitutional House."

"That's right. It does a fellow good to see a little of the world. You ain't young but once. Started anything down there yet?" With that Red winked and hitched his chair over a bit. It wasn't everybody he would hitch his chair over to.

BOONE STOP

I saw the right answer to make. "Sure. Leave it to your Uncle Fuller to start something."

"Which one?" asked Red, dropping his voice.

I wouldn't let on that I didn't know exactly what he meant. Red had seen so much of the world and had worked in the best pool-halls in Kansas City, so that it was pretty hard to keep up with him. But I wouldn't let him see.

"With any of them that comes along." I winked like Red. "I don't take anything off anybody."

Leaning over, Red put his elbow on my chair arm. "Which one?"

I wouldn't give myself away yet. I was glad I had sat in the writing-room playing seven-up with them so that anybody passing could see. That was better than going back to the sample-room as if you were ashamed of it.

"I bet I know all right."

I'd let him guess. "Which one?"

"Edna. I understand she likes a good time."

He had not meant the drummers. Of course he wouldn't be interested in drummers. Red had seen too much of the world to be interested in fat traveling-men. Who would be interested in them? Nobody. It was all right to have a game of seven-up with them now and then, but no man of the world would be interested in them. I was glad that I hadn't given myself away. What would Red have thought of me then?

"Oh, she likes it all right, all right!" And I smiled back at him. That way I didn't have to answer his question and wasn't telling any lie. "Leave it to your Uncle Fuller to pick them out." Using Uncle

BOONE STOP

Fuller that way showed that I could talk to a man. You learned a lot from associating with Red. Mid wouldn't have known what to say.

When he said Edna the place seemed to whirl around. I hadn't thought about being a man of the world with her. She was one of the ladies who cleaned up the rooms and waited on the table. Sometimes when I would come in in the afternoon—especially if I came in early—she would be holding a slip between her teeth, shaking the pillow in it. She wasn't very good-looking, but she was ahead of any of the others.

"Don't pay any attention to them if they hold you off at first. They all do that. Just go ahead and laugh at them. That's the way to handle them."

"But what if they don't like it?"

"Don't worry about that. They all do. They're just pretending. That's part of the game. They won't have any use for you unless you show them who you are."

I began to feel excited and interested. I was glad I had met Red. I could learn a lot from him.

"Do you just smile at them—and then kind of say something pretty?"

"No," said Red, with scorn, and I wished I hadn't said so much. I would have to draw him out and not give myself away.

"Well, that's one way," I said. "Some people use it. I was just wondering how you did. Do you give them a sack of candy?"

"That 'll do to begin with. When you give it to 'em say, 'Sweets to the sweet.' Don't hand them the

BOONE STOP

sack. Feed it to 'em. Put it in their mouths yourself, this way."

Leaning over, Red put his arm around me and pinched up his finger and thumb as if he had a piece of candy. "Then you see you got your arm around hers and she can't do nothing. Don't pay any attention if they kick and squirm. You got to expect that. Get a couple of glasses of beer in you and then you won't feel afraid."

Red brought his face close up to mine and showed me how to do it. Red should have shaved oftener; the red hairs looked pretty big. "And when you get hold of 'em once, don't let loose. It's a great game."

"It sure is," I said, and kept thinking about it after he had gone to make change. I tried to watch the pool-game, but when they laughed I didn't know what it was about.

"Well, old sport," said Merle, putting on his coat, "want to go down the street with a gentleman?"

"Sure," I said, "but I guess you're not going then."

With that Red and Charley Colden and all the rest of them laughed. I was getting pretty good at saying things back quick. I was getting better and better all the time and more like a man. I wasn't much like Mid any more.

"I have something to tell you," said Merle, and I got my foot started right and caught step with him. That way they could tell you were used to being in the city. But Pa never paid any attention to that; he went slapping along as if he was in a corn row. He couldn't seem to take up city manners, and one day when I said, as politely as I could, that city

BOONE STOP

people all kept step, he blew through his nose and said he reckoned it didn't make any difference how you walked as long as you got there.

"Let 'er go," I said, but I wouldn't be too anxious. I'd still talk like a man of the world.

"It's something good—something you'll want to hear."

"Shoot."

"You have been elected to the Club."

I felt something rise up in me and feel tight—as if somebody you had once done a kindness for had died and left you their fortune. I was now somebody. Even if I had been born on a farm and hadn't had much of a show, I was getting ahead. Lots of boys who had lived in Boone Stop all their lives, and whose fathers carried mustache combs and wore vici kid, had never been asked to join. If I could get this far ahead, with Pa never caring about the things that mattered, there wasn't any end as to how far I could go. I could go to Kansas City or Chicago and soon be one of them. I saw plainer and plainer every day that I was smart. All that kept me back was Pa. The people of the world were beginning to recognize that I was somebody, but Pa didn't think that I could even take care of myself around a pool-hall.

"Well?" said Merle, jerking his head toward a swinging-door.

"You can tell them that I will accept," I said and kind of laughed. But that didn't seem to be what Merle meant.

He faced around and I saw that we were in front of No. 9. I had never been in No. 9 and I felt

BOONE STOP

quivery when he said that. I knew what he meant. He wanted me to go in and set them up.

Pa always hurried by No. 9, and when some man came out and stumbled because the iron step was higher than the sidewalk he would stiffen and mutter and say something about the work of the devil. I had always thought so, too, but I mustn't let on to Merle—not if I expected to be anybody in his eyes.

Inside it didn't look very much like what I thought a haunt of Satan would. Three or four men were standing before a long counter with a waiter behind in a barber's coat, working a row of faucets. The wall behind him was made out of looking-glasses that would have been better if somebody had put some coal-oil on a flannel rag and wiped the fly-specks off. The men were drinking beer that had more foam on it than the kind you found in the bottles in the alley, and discussing the tariff. They didn't seem to know that they were going to hell. Probably their fathers had never told them that if they went to a saloon they would go to hell. They didn't look very different from the people who were going to the other place and they seemed about as happy. You would think that a person who had lost his immortal soul would feel pretty badly about it, but they didn't. They went right on talking and arguing without ever stopping to think about the years ahead of them.

One of the men was Jim Pinneo. Jim worked at the Red Star Livery Barn and when Ozy drove in and unbuckled the lines and grandly threw them out, one on each side, Jim would get up off the cot covered with horse-blankets and come out of the

BOONE STOP

little office by the front door and take care of the horses. He never minded what time of day or night you got in; he would unhitch the horses, rub the sweat off their shoulders with the palm of his hand, and never complain.

I had never known before that Jim had lost his immortal soul, but he didn't seem to care; he seemed more interested in having a few minutes' talk with somebody and then getting back to work. Every now and then he would say, "Watch my glass, Bill," and would push open the door and look across the street to the barn to see if any trade had come in.

"Hello, George," said Merle, carelessly, as he put his foot on the brass railing and hooked his arm over the counter. "You were right about that, George. Oil of bergamot does kill the smell."

I saw right away that if you wanted to be anybody in No. 9 you would have to have something to talk to the bartender about. Mighty proud Merle seemed to be of how well he knew George. Looking up and down the counter he spoke to Jim Pinneo and the rest of them, but not the way he did to George. It was more of an honor to know George than it was Jim Pinneo. Jim Pinneo wasn't anybody—I could see that. He just took care of your horses at the livery-barn.

"Well, what 'll you have, old sport?" Merle asked.

"This is on me, old top. What 'll you have?"

"Well, have it your way," said Merle, obligingly.

"I guess I'll take a tub of suds."

"I guess I will, too," I said, as if it wasn't anything more than a dish of ice-cream.

Setting the glasses in front of us, George scraped off

BOONE STOP

the foam with a celluloid paper-cutter and wiped up with a rag that should have been boiled in the sun.

It wasn't good. It was bitter and nothing like grape-juice. But I would have to get it down some way. It seemed strange that people would ever want to drink enough of that to lose their immortal soul.

"Good stuff," said Merle, setting down his glass and licking the foam off his lips.

"It sure is," I said. "Hits the right spot for Yours Truly."

"It sure does."

"Have another."

"Surest thing you know."

George filled them up again and scraped them off and got out his rag. If this was all there was to a saloon I didn't see why people were running the risk of losing their immortal souls by going to it. I'd rather go to the candy-kitchen any time.

There were lots of things that I wished I could ask Pa about, but I couldn't. He would have said, "The Lord in the fullness of His wisdom will some day see fit to enlighten you on many things that you now have no need of." But I did have need of them. You couldn't understand half the jokes unless you knew things that way. But just the same I was learning. If Pa wouldn't tell me, I would find out some other way. Red's was a good place, and now I saw the saloon was going to be. The beer wasn't very good, but the pictures were.

But I was glad Gran'ma wasn't there to see them. They didn't look very much like "Reaping the Tares" or "Resurrection Morn."

BOONE STOP

"How you like where you are now?" asked Merle, while George stood wiping glasses and listening.

George would see now that I was somebody. This was a good chance to show him where I stayed.

"Fine," I said. "The Commercial House is a great place. Come when you want to, go when you want to. That's what I like. Good bunch of fellows there."

"I guess there's something else good there, too," said George with a wink that pulled up the corner of his mouth.

"That's a good one, George," laughed Merle like one who sees a point and thinks the others don't see it yet. But I knew what George meant.

"Come on and tell us about it, old sport," said Merle. "It's all in the family."

"Don't worry about me," I said and nodded my head like one who could tell a great deal more if he wanted to. "It'll be a cold day in August when Yours Truly don't know what's going on."

I could see that George was going to respect me. It wouldn't be long till I could come in No. 9 and have something to talk to George about.

In the saloon I felt bold and confident, but at the door going out I didn't. What if somebody should see me? One moment I wanted to talk boldly out and the next I was afraid somebody would be passing. Maybe Pa himself. I knew what I would say to him. I would make short work of him. Red was right about it—beer did put it into you. Just let him step up to me and see what would happen.

"Come on, old head," said Merle.

"Surest thing you know. Got a cigarette?"

BOONE STOP

In the door I lit it and took a good long puff. I didn't care who was looking. Then I walked up the street looking everybody in the eye. Let the people say what they would, I was my own boss.

All the next day at the mine I couldn't help thinking about Edna and what Red had told me and about the pictures on the wall. I turned the bit and held the hose for the powder all day with the hammering of the steam-drills in my ears, but I didn't hear them. I was thinking of what Red had said. When the pit gong rang I made the first bucket and hurried to the Commercial House, but my room had been made up and she wasn't there.

Then one evening I saw the door partly open and I knew Edna was inside.

I stopped, with my mouth open and my heart beating fast. The metal handle on the slop-jar sounded as she picked it up. If I did not hurry she would be going out. But I did not go in. I began to tell myself that I must go down and see the clerk and ask him if the committee had decided when the next dance at the Club was to be. I must go now. I could not wait till I went down for supper.

The committee had not met yet.

"I just thought I would ask," I said.

Now that I had gone down-stairs I wanted to be back. I hurried up the stairs, which had some of the brass strips on the edge of the steps worn in two in the middle. I would go straight ahead and do it now. I had made up my mind to that. But the door was locked; Edna had finished her work.

Sometimes in the dining-room I would think I caught her looking at me and I would turn my eyes

BOONE STOP

away. In a few moments I would remember how Red had said that was part of the game and to look at her and smile. But she did not smile in return. It seemed that if they were as anxious as Red said they would smile back. Down the hall I would slip at night, hoping maybe she would be passing by, but she never was. Lying in bed I would think what I would say to her and what she would say to me—and the next morning I would go down to breakfast and not lift my eyes to her. I would figure out at night that she wanted to get acquainted with me just as much as I did with her and that she was doing all she possibly could to encourage me and the next morning I would change my mind at the dining-room door and go out to a short-order restaurant and have my breakfast on a stool. It was funny. Red hadn't said anything about any trouble that way. By the way he talked I thought you could hand them a sack of candy and put your arm around them, but I saw you couldn't. It was more complicated than he had said.

If she would just make the first move. If she would suddenly lean over and kiss me—then it wouldn't be so hard. Then I would put my arm around her like Red said. It seemed that if they wanted to be kissed so much as Red said they would show it more.

Every evening I would leave early, hoping when I got to the hotel that Edna would be in my room dusting up, but she never was. I would have to wait till my time came. If I didn't find her in there now I would wait till county-fair week and then I would take a few days off and stay in the room all

BOONE STOP

day if I wanted to. It would be easy then. I would have a big time that week. I would save up my money and then I would have everything I wanted—girls, buggy-rides, beer, candy—everything. The county fair was worth waiting for because everybody was there, with side-shows clear around the Square and snake-eaters and fat women and sword-swallowers and a tattooed man with eagles and anchors and sails all over him.

The county fair would last a week and if you would watch around there was usually some way of making money. If it wasn't going up when the Indian doctor got through and being the first one to buy some of his kidney cure there was always a pie-eating contest or something that way where you could get some easy money. People would come for miles and miles around; everybody you ever heard of would be there and then your mother would lead you up to some queer, gangly-looking person and say, "Cleve, this is your cousin Harlan." You would shake hands with him and hope that none of the other fellows saw you because he would be pretty green-looking. His pants wouldn't come all the way down and he would go around to the grocery-store and buy broken crackers and eat them because they were cheaper, instead of buying candy the way the rest of the fellows did. Then your mother would say, "Now, Cleve, you can go down the street with Harlan and see the fair together," and it would be some time before you could give him the slip.

One Saturday afternoon when I was coming back from scattering handbills I stopped down by the city scales where Charley Colden was posting up a

BOONE STOP

bill, and looked to see what it was and I got a surprise. It made me feel kind of dizzy because I had forgotten all about her. It always makes me feel that way when I suddenly think of old girls—especially if I have quarreled with the present one. Then the old one seems nicer than ever. Charley was standing on the ground with a long-handled mop in his hand, sticking the mop in a bucket of paste and swabbing it over the board and when the paste would run down the handle he would snap off what he could and wipe the rest on his trousers until they looked pretty bad. Ma would not have let me come in the house with them on, but Charley didn't seem to mind. He never paid much attention to his clothes, except when he had on his uniform at the Copus Club. He was always thinking about the government and how much better off the country would be without the Democratic party. Charley and Pa could never get along very well together because Pa was a Democrat and had named me after Cleveland and Charley wasn't very well educated and was a Republican. Pa didn't have any use for anybody who was a Republican and could read. If the person couldn't read, then Pa said there was some excuse for it, but there wasn't any excuse for Charley because he could read and had plenty of time for it. But it didn't make any difference to me what a person's politics was if I liked the person and he could tell good stories. Some of the best storytellers in Boone Stop were Republicans, but I never let on to Pa that I had much to do with them.

The pieces didn't fit very well, but I could read the poster just the same.

BOONE STOP

COMING, it said, COMING—THE FLYING RISTINES. GREATEST AERIAL ACT THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. Then some other type said, DEATH-DEFYING—THE SLIDE FOR LIFE. IT TAKES THE HAIR OFF YOUR HEAD. Then farther on it said ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY—FAMOUS QUEENS OF HISTORY.

I knew who it was. It was Madame Ristine and her daughter. It made me feel quivery when I thought of it. She must have sold her pony circus, because it didn't mention anything about the trained pony or dogs. The reading sounded like Madame Ristine, because Madame Ristine always liked to talk big. She never said anything was less than it was. Nobody but Madame Ristine would say that anything took the hair off your head, because it wouldn't unless it was dandruff or something that way. By aerial she meant the air.

It might be what she said it was the world had ever seen, but I had my doubts because if it was that she would spend most of her time in New York or Chicago. However, I would not say anything; I would do all I could to make her show a success.

When Charley got some more of the poster up there was a picture of Madame Ristine with some gold spangles around her waist, balancing herself on a trapeze bar with an astonished crowd far below. You couldn't see their faces or anything; their faces were mostly dots but, in the distance was a church steeple so that you could tell how high up she was. She had her arms folded and they were pretty big, more as if she was a boxer, but on her feet she had slippers with strings crisscrossed over

BOONE STOP

her ankles, and on her head she had a golden crown, except whoever had printed it hadn't done a very good job so that some of the gold had got on the church steeple.

When the rest of the bill went up I felt more tingly than ever because it was Veve. It showed Veve sliding down a wire holding on by her teeth. Under it it said in big letters, VEEVE RISTINE, THE FLYING FLAME, IN HER NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN SLIDE FOR LIFE. It made me feel kind of funny to look at it because she didn't have many clothes on. She didn't seem to have anything on except around her middle and there wasn't very much of that. It didn't seem so bad to see Madame Ristine without anything much on, but with Veve it was different. I would take her out of that life; I made up my mind to that. Any girl who was as smart and as talented as she was shouldn't have to go around hanging on a wire by her teeth without anything on except a pair of tights and a diamond buckle. I couldn't help thinking about the old times with her. Veve was smart. She could turn cart-wheels and whistle on her fingers as well as any boy could. There wasn't anything she couldn't do. It made me weepy to think about all those days now so far gone. If I had been alone I would have cried a little, because when I think of old times that way I like to cry a bit. I always like to think of old times; old times always seem so much happier than present times. I don't know why it is, but the days that are no more never seem to have any trouble in them. They just seem to be filled with going somewhere and getting something to eat and no trouble at all.

BOONE STOP

The more I thought about Veve the better I liked her. Maybe if Pa had stayed in Rutherford I would have married her. Going away that way changed everything. It is strange how little things change your whole life. Some little thing happens and at the time you don't think anything about it, and then later you look back and you see that it was one of the biggest things that happened in your life. But you can never tell about such things till later; you have to look back on them to appreciate them. If Pa had just moved his finger a little that day on the map we wouldn't ever have come to Boone Stop at all. We would have gone to some other town and I wouldn't have known any one I now knew—Cleo or anybody—and the Flying Ristines might never have come there to give a show, and things would have turned out a good deal differently.

Veve would be a wife to be proud of. There wasn't a girl in Boone Stop who could hang by her teeth the way Veve could and go sliding down a wire in a never-to-be-forgotten slide for life. They couldn't do anything but sit around and crochet or play a little croquet or maybe thump a few tunes out of a piano. Veve was a girl who could do things. If I married her I would take her out of that kind of life. She could travel around and slide down the wire if she wanted to—that would be all right and make all the other fellows jealous—but she would have to wear more clothes. Madame Ristine ought to know better than to let her go out that way with just a pair of tights on and a buckle. I would be gentle but I would be firm. That would be my motto: gentleness but firmness.

BOONE STOP

What would Veve say when she saw me? Wouldn't she be surprised! Should I meet her at the train or wait till the evening of the slide and then while everybody was gasping and admiring her should I walk up to her in front of everybody and say, "Why, hello, Veve!" That would show them who I was. There wasn't another fellow in town who knew an actress that way. If she kind of hesitated and didn't know me because I had changed so much I would say, "How would you like to have some grape-juice?" That would make her remember quick enough. She would think about how we had tried to drink up all the grape-juice before the world came to an end. Then she would laugh and run toward me and maybe throw her arms around me. There wasn't any telling what Veve wouldn't do. She didn't care what people thought and she didn't have any father always on her trail. When she put her arms around me and patted me on the shoulder the people would gasp. I would be somebody then. Let Cleo Chambers turn up her nose if she wanted to. All right, just let her. Playing a piano wasn't everything.

Putting his brush in his paste-bucket and leaning the handle against the bill-board, Charley Colden walked back a few feet and put his hands on his hips to see how the poster looked.

"Some figger," said Charley, winking up one eye and jerking his head toward Veve.

But I didn't laugh. If it had been somebody else I guess I would have laughed, too, because I generally laugh when somebody says something about a woman and winks up his eye, but now it

BOONE STOP

didn't seem funny. With Veve it was different. But I mustn't let on; if I did, Charley Colden would think I wasn't much of a man. You can't let another man see the soft side of you that way. So I just smiled a little and walked away.

I would have some experiences so that when the men told stories I would know what they were talking about. Everybody seemed to be living but me. I was out in the world and staying at the Commercial House and there was no reason why I shouldn't have some fun. "What's the use of living if you don't have some experiences?" I kept asking myself. I was old enough to know what I was doing. There wasn't any reason if I wanted to kiss a girl why I shouldn't. Besides they liked it. Red said so. The next time I got Edna in the room alone I wouldn't act like a baby. I would act like a man; I would walk straight in and start something.

Then one evening it happened. Coming down the hall, I put my key in the lock to find the door open. She was sitting in the chair, with the dust-cloth over her shoulder, looking out the window. I wondered why she was looking out as there wasn't much to look at—mostly the back of the Red Star Livery Barn with broken-down buggies with their tongues turned up to take up less room and a horse that needed doctoring.

"Excuse me," she said. "I was just—just finishing up."

I felt my heart begin to beat and I began to say to myself: "I'm going through with it this time. I'm going through with it. I've got to this time."

Closing the door, I tried to smile; but it wasn't

BOONE STOP

much of a smile. It was more like when Pa used to take me out behind the smoke-house.

"That's all right," I said. "There's plenty of room." I looked around, calculating its size. "It's ten by twelve, anyway. Isn't that plenty of room?" Then I laughed, but it sounded pretty flat. It wasn't much to say, but it was better than nothing. Even when I said it it didn't sound like me talking. It sounded away off, like when you are out of your head and the doctor is telling them how often to give the medicine.

"Don't go. I've got something for you," I said and pulled the sack of candy out of the bureau drawer. Untwisting the mouth, I got out a piece with my thumb and forefinger. "Sweets to the sweet."

She had finished wiping the mirror and was turning to leave the room, but when she heard me say that she began fluffing her hair and seeing if her nose was all right. She wasn't much to look at, with her stub nose and her freckly complexion, but she had to stop and fix her hair before she answered.

"I don't care if I do," she said and held out her hand for the sack. Before I thought I gave it to her.

Red hadn't said anything about them reaching out for the sack.

"Sweets to the sweet," I said again and then wished I hadn't said it. It sounded pretty flat after having said it once.

"Come on and keep me company," she said, biting a piece in two and handing me the other half. "We're having a regular party, ain't we?"

"Yes, regular party." Then I added, "Select

BOONE STOP

company," and laughed and she laughed, too. It was good enough to laugh at, but it wasn't as good as I could do it. She ought to see me at a dance.

"You've started now and you've got to go on with it," I kept telling myself. "You've got to finish it."

What would she do? Would she scream? Why hadn't I got a livery team and gone out driving, and then I would have had her where I wanted her. "Just get acquainted and do it next time," something said, and then something else said: "You've got to go on with it. You've got to finish it."

Getting out a piece of candy I held it between my fingers, with my little one curled up. She could see that I could be elegant.

"You've got a sweet tooth, haven't you?" I said, and stepped behind her. Turning around she faced me and I wasn't any better off than before. Red hadn't said anything about them turning around.

Then I thought what to say; it came to me all of a sudden. "Shut your eyes and you will get a big surprise."

"Will it be something nice?"

"Sure."

Stretching out her neck and holding out her chin, she closed her eyes and opened her mouth, with her hands sticking out behind.

"Now is your chance," I said to myself. "You've got to go on with it."

Quickly I put my arm around her waist.

"What do you mean?" she said, and stiffened her back.

BOONE STOP

My heart began to beat faster than ever and something got in my throat.

"Nothing," I mumbled and saw that wasn't much of an answer. Then I thought of something better. "Didn't I tell you it was going to be a surprise?"

"Well, see that you don't do it again." But she didn't make me take my arm away.

"All right," I said, pulling my arm up tight. Then I kissed her, but it wasn't very much of a kiss. It was too quick and hurried—more like when an aunt comes to see you—after you've got to be pretty good size—and does it fast.

"I like your nerve," she said, but she didn't say it very stern, so I pulled her up tight again and then she bent over and put her head on my shoulder.

"There, I've done it," I said to myself. "I knew I would. I told myself I would and now I have."

It wasn't much fun. But it was more than if it was Mid. The way Red talked I thought the moment you kissed a girl you would be happy, but you were not. It was kind of thrilly and exciting, but not as much as watching a high dive.

"While I've got her here I'll kiss her again," I said to myself and bent over.

Suddenly she pushed me away and put her finger to her lip. "Sh—" she whispered. Somebody was coming down the hall. She heard it before I did. She was more used to watching. Then came a knock at the door.

Opening the door as little as I could, I looked out. It was the boy who helped with the trunks in the sample-room and stayed at the desk after the 11:22 came in.

BOONE STOP

"Lady down-stairs to see you. She says come down at once."

He stood waiting. It was too important to go off as if he was just knocking people out of a morning.

A lady to see me! Who could it be? Was it Cleo? I always thought of her first. But she wouldn't come to the hotel after me—unless somebody was sick. Maybe it was her father and she had come to me first. She believed in me and all the time she was hurrying to me I was kissing another girl. What should I do? Should I tell her, or should I never say anything about it and be nicer to her than ever to make up for it?

"I'll be right down," I said, but it didn't sound very careless.

The boy went slowly down the hall, looking over his shoulder.

I had been deceiving Cleo and she was the best girl in the world. Cleo was different. It would be more fun to kiss her. She was too good for me. As long as I lived I would never get tangled up again with another woman.

"Somebody's waiting for me," I said to Edna as if she hadn't heard.

"Some lady is," she corrected and picked up her dust-cloth with a jerk.

As I closed the door she was helping herself to another piece of candy. I did not care; she could have all she wanted. I had something else to think of.

Could Cleo read it in my eyes? Could she see a guilty look in me? I took a deep breath; I must be myself before I got there so that she could not tell.

BOONE STOP

I would make it up by doing whatever she wanted me to.

But it was not Cleo. It was Gran'ma. She was sitting in one of the rocking-chairs in the line along the wall on the tile floor, with her cane leaning against the arm of the chair, watching the stairs for me.

"Of course it wouldn't be Cleo," I said to myself. "I might have known it wouldn't. She isn't that kind."

Gran'ma had come to ask me to come back. Why couldn't she have waited till some other time? Of all times, she had picked out the worst. And she hadn't come for anything but to ask me to come home. Well, I would be firm with her. Life was too exciting to go home and hang around there with Mid. If I had known that it was only Gran'ma I wouldn't have hurried down.

Gran'ma began getting up, bracing her cane on the tile floor. The rubber hose was worn off so that it would not stay where she placed it.

"Clevie," she said, "come home quick."

There was no greeting; no calling me her boy and asking me if I wasn't ashamed. Just that sentence. I knew that something was wrong. Taking hold of my arm she steadied herself till we were out on the street, but even then she didn't let loose. She kept hold of my arm more than she needed to just to keep from falling.

"What is it?" I asked, but she only clung to me the tighter.

It was a block before she answered. "Oh, how can I tell you?"

BOONE STOP

Had Pa died? He was getting older all the time. His hair was grayer and more white was coming in his beard, and the little finger of his right hand was curling up from rheumatism. What had I said to him on the street corner? I had been cruel to him. Had a son ever been so unthankful and so ungracious as I had been? If I hadn't said those things! I would always remember those words.

"They will haunt me all through life," I said to myself. "It makes no difference where I go or what I do those words come back to me. And I never can tell anybody. They will be my punishment." Why had I left home? Why hadn't I stayed with him and taken care of him in his last years the way a son should? Instead of that I had gone off and was leading a fast life. That was my punishment. The Lord would not be mocked. I would make up for it by joining the church. I would study and go away to school and be a preacher. I would know how to deal with boys starting down the road to sin. Maybe if I led a true and humble life and saved others from ruin it would make up for what I had done.

Red Milligan was standing in the door of his pool-hall. "Hello!" he said pulling up his trousers. I was glad that he hadn't said old sport. But I did not reply. Our ways had parted forever. After I got my education I would show Red the better life and bring him into the fold.

Pennies would be on Pa's eyes and he would be lying in the parlor and a strange woman would be doing the cooking.

But it wasn't Pa.

BOONE STOP

I could see that as soon as I got home. Pa hadn't yet got back from the mines.

"In there," said Gran'ma, leading the way up the stairs and reaching up to get hold of the railing.

Pushing open the door I went in. It was Susie. She was lying on the spare bed with her face in the pillow. The other pillow, instead of being stiff and starched and new looking, was wrinkled and sunk down and on it was a wet spot.

XIII

"Oh, my daughter! my daughter!" says Pa, like a verse from the Bible, and a tear runs down Ma's wrist.

WHEN I closed the door and came down-stairs the house echoed and seemed deserted, like coming back after a funeral. Ma was in the kitchen, sitting in the leather-bottomed chair I had made for her and looking straight at the dried apples, never noticing that they had boiled over.

Putting her arms around me she kissed me. "Oh, my son! my son!" she said and clung to me. It had been a long time since Ma had kissed me.

Mid wasn't the one she came to in trouble. I couldn't help thinking of that.

What would Pa say? What would he do? It made me tremble. Always had Pa fought the devil and now the devil had struck in Pa's own family.

Susie was Pa's favorite; Susie, who had always been so sweet and gentle and who would climb up on his lap and pull the hairs in his ears, when Mid and I were afraid to come near; Susie, who had never complained of a headache so that she would not have to go to church—Susie, his only daughter.

When I complained of a headache, it didn't go.

BOONE STOP

Pa would just look at me and say, "We shall expect you ready promptly."

Should I go to meet him and tell him as we were walking to the house or should I take him into the parlor? What should I say to him? Should I say baby or adultery? Adultery sounded worse, but that was what the Bible said. It had never been easy to tell Pa anything and now it seemed impossible—especially about Susie. If it had been Mid it would have been different.

I knew that I should tell him about myself. I knew that I should, but I wasn't going to. I would try to make up for it by being good and trying to make him happy in his old days. That would be my punishment. Instead of going with the other boys and having a good time, I would devote myself to taking care of Pa in his old age. I would give up Cleo, the infidel's daughter. There was nothing that I wouldn't give up. I would even resign from the Copus Club.

"He's coming," said Mid, letting the window-blind fall back.

My heart began to beat. The time had come. I must tell him.

Suddenly Ma put her apron over her face and went stumbling into the kitchen, while Gran'ma pushed forward in her chair and drew me down. "God bless you," she said and patted me on the back. It wasn't often Gran'ma mentioned God.

Should I go slow and mournful, or light and easy, as if it wasn't anything much?

Pa was coming, his dinner-bucket in his hand, the rheumatism on the hard sidewalk showing plainer

BOONE STOP

than ever, his head bowed down, thinking. Pa was always thinking—never looking around to see who was passing. At Rutherford he was looking at the crops, and if the dry weather was bringing out the chinch-bug, and throwing up his hands when anybody passed, whether he knew them or not, but now he wasn't so much interested in the world. His interest was inside.

The world was not turning out the way it should. People no longer did things the way they used to, and man was not meant to work in the ground. He was meant to till the soil and work in the sunshine, but Pa would not complain. The Lord had led him to Boone Stop. The Lord directed his finger on the map and he must wait the Lord's time to know. A higher intelligence than his was guiding things aright.

"Good evening, Pa," I said, and held out my hand.

His head rose and his shoulders straightened until he seemed as tall as when he had defied the railroad men. He changed the bucket to his left hand.

"Good evening, Cleveland," he said and shook hands with me as if I was company who had come a long ways. But I could not get hold of his hand very well because the little finger curled up.

He did not know what I had come to tell him. He thought I had seen the error of my ways and had come back.

Lifting his eyes to Heaven Pa closed them. His lips moved, but he did not say anything. If it had been a few years before he would have thanked the Lord out loud, but he didn't talk so much about the Lord any more. He kept it more to himself.

BOONE STOP

"Look, Mother," called Pa excitedly, going sideways up the porch steps with his rheumatism foot. "The prodigal son has returned and you know how prodigal sons can eat. Hadn't you better fry some mush?" There wasn't anything I liked better than fried mush. Fried mush and honey. Pa pushed out a chair and took my hat. "Get out the best you've got. You know husks are not very sustaining, Mother. Do the rooms look kind of small, Cleveland?" He was so happy that he didn't wait for an answer. "I remember when I was a boy in Ohio and had been working in the timber, or taking a load of tobacco to Zanesville, how small the rooms looked when I got back. If they had moved a motto I could tell it. Do you remember, Mother, when you went to Kansas City for your operation before the children were born, how cramped and small everything looked when you got back? Now, Mother, now—you know well enough you did. You know the oilcloth looked pretty thin and worn, but you wouldn't admit it. That was the time you went to the hotel and made up your own bed." Leaning back in his chair, Pa wiped his eyes at the recollection. "You made it because you thought the man at the desk looked tired. You didn't know he had a hired girl to do it. I haven't told that on you in a long time, have I, Mother?"

It made mequivery in the throat to see Pa laughing and being young again. He thought his troubles were over and that we were all united again. He did not know that they were just beginning.

There was no restraining Pa. He laughed and talked and joked. It was a solemn thing to hear

BOONE STOP

Pa joke, but I was glad he got fun out of his jokes. They were the same ones he used to have—about quicker than a hen could crack a walnut and how long Abraham Lincoln said a man's legs should be.

At supper Gran'ma had Susie down, with her face washed and her hair done up. Susie was afraid that Pa would be looking at her, but he wasn't. He was thinking of me.

Turning, he hurried down-cellar to come up a few moments later with a bottle of elderberry wine. "I guess we've been saving this long enough," he said, opening the corkscrew and bracing the bottle between his knees. "This house may burn down or blow away or something—eh, Mother?"

He was so happy and jubilant that we began to feel so, too, and soon we were talking away as if there wasn't anything the matter. Even Ma began to think of funny things to tell, and asked Pa if he remembered the time the mouse ran up his leg at the rag-tacking and how he had danced around grabbing himself till finally he upset old lady Grannis's chair just as she was sitting down.

It was the most fun we had had at supper in a long time, and when I was laughing at Pa grabbing his pants it seemed awfully funny, but in a moment I would be thinking about Susie.

Day after day went by but I couldn't tell Pa. When he came down to breakfast he would say, "Good morning, everybody," as if he was company, and when Ma would be carrying out hot water for scalding a chicken and had her hands full, Pa would tickle her ribs as if he was trying to make her drop

BOONE STOP

the bucket, and laugh and look out the corners of his eyes to see if the rest of us were laughing.

Ma would twist her shoulders and sidle out the door and say: "I think I have been feeding you too well. You're getting too frisky."

Then the rest of us would laugh, and while we were laughing tears would come into our eyes, but Pa never knew what they meant.

When Susie wasn't crying she didn't look very different. She didn't look like one who had committed a great sin. She seemed about the same except she would be smiling one moment and the next she would begin swallowing hard. Why had Susie been chosen for this sadness? She was too sweet and too gentle. She had never before done anything wrong, and now she was the one to suffer. If it had been me who had got into the trouble I wouldn't have been surprised. I deserved it, but Susie didn't. She had never stayed away from church, or gone to pool-halls, or drunk beer. I had done all these and there wasn't anything the matter with me except a few warts and some pimples.

When I would see Susie staring out of a window, never winking, just looking straight ahead, I would feel sorry, but I never put my arms around her and kissed her. We had not been brought up that way.

I knew that I ought to be mad with Ozy Getchell, and I was, but all the time I could not help thinking more about how it had happened and whereabouts, and if he had said, "Sweets to the sweet." After all, I wasn't much better than Ozy. I must tell Pa what Susie had done and when I was telling him I would know all the time that I wasn't a bit better.

BOONE STOP

I would be sad while I was thinking about Susie, but before I knew it I would be thinking about the mock trial and wishing I could go. We always had a mock trial every year. This time Speed Mosby was to be tried for stealing a bushel of Widow Woods's turnips.

"I'll take Cleo and this 'll be the last time," I said. "One more night of pleasure won't hurt me."

That would be the last pleasure I would ever have. After that I would renounce the world and suffer in silence.

How would I ask Cleo? Should I write or try to see her at the candy-kitchen? If I wrote, what would I say? What kind of stationery should I use? Should I call her Dear Cleo or Dear Miss Chambers? There were so many things to decide.

Her envelope was smaller and had thin, faint lines running across it.

"That's just like me, not knowing what kind of stationery to use," I told myself. "You never do anything right. The pale-blue envelope is the fashionable one. What must she have thought about your big white one?" I would never know how to conduct myself in society.

My dear Mr. Seed,—

I hadn't put in any My. Wouldn't I ever learn to do anything properly? As I read her answer my head began to swim, like drinking too much water on a hot day. The lines kind of blurred and ran together.

I thank you for remembering me in regard to the mock trial, but I beg to say that I have already accepted an escort for that occasion.

BOONE STOP

Of course she wouldn't accept me. Was there any reason why she should? I was tall and had freckles and straw hair and big feet and didn't know how to act in society. Of course she wouldn't accept me. I might have known that. None of the girls would—except some of them that lived down by the brick-yards. I had no right to ask a pretty, sweet girl like Cleo who was so far above me. I wasn't anybody and Cleo's father was a lawyer and could quote Latin.

She had written it elegantly. "In regard to the mock trial"—that was the way to say things. I would never have thought of using "in regard to" and "an escort for that occasion." I wasn't anything to a grand lady like her. How she must have laughed at my letter!

While I was calling myself names and feeling sorry for myself, I would suddenly come across Susie silently staring out the window, and then I would feel ashamed for going around thinking only of myself and my little troubles when this awful thing was hanging over Susie. I would make up my mind not to think about myself or Cleo again, but in half an hour I would be wondering if she really did have an escort, or just said that she had. Nobody seemed to have any troubles but me.

Usually Pa didn't want to go anywhere except to church, or to lodge once in a while, but on the night of the mock trial he was back from the mines half an hour early, trying to balance a broom on his foot, or untying Ma's apron-strings till it didn't seem very much like Pa. Susie said she had a headache and didn't feel very much like going, and would stay with Gran'ma, so I had to walk with Mid.

BOONE STOP

Everybody in Boone Stop was there. There couldn't have been any more if somebody was going to be hanged. A curtain was stretched across the rostrum and behind it you could hear the people talking and snickering. Mr. Chambers came out and made a speech, and when the curtain was pulled back the judge came in smoking a corn-cob pipe. It was too funny for anything, and especially when the Widow Woods told how Speed Mosby had got down on his knees and asked her to be his'n and she told him that she had a goat already, and how he had gone out and stolen the turnips for revenge.

I was having a good time and enjoying it when I heard a laugh behind me.

I knew whose laugh it was. It was Merle Sewell's—and it was the laugh he had when he didn't care how many people were looking at him. I turned around to let people see how well I knew him, and there was Cleo with him. He was her escort. There was a lump on his breast and I knew what he had in it. I felt the blood going to my head. I would never have anything more to do with him. Never. Didn't he know that Cleo belonged to me? I would get even with him. Just wait and see. My time would come.

But I didn't speak to him. I would show him what I thought of him. After that the play kind of petered out. It started off all right, but it wasn't much. When the judge went to sleep and somebody woke him up and he said, "I'll raise you ten," the audience laughed and cheered as if it was awfully funny, but it wasn't very funny, because a judge wouldn't do that. And when the judge took his whiskers in his hand

BOONE STOP

and leaned over to spit, Merle snorted through his nose as if it was the funniest thing he had ever seen.

Pa thought it was funny, too, especially when the jury got to passing around a bottle, and he kept talking about it all the way home; but I wasn't thinking about that. I was thinking about that lump on Merle's breast. Just about this minute he would be reaching in after it. It made me feel choky. Pa was laughing and talking as we came up the walk, but I wasn't paying much attention.

There was a light in the house.

"What does this mean?" he said. "They're still up."

Gran'ma and Susie hadn't gone to bed. Gran'ma was biting her lips. The Bible was on the center-table. Gran'ma had been reading it.

"Isom," said Gran'ma, straightening out a wrinkle on the throw over the table, "Susie wants to talk to you."

"Why, certainly! I should consider it an honor and a privilege."

"Alone, Isom."

"What is this to be—a surprise-party? Whose birthday is it? There are so many of them and they come so fast nowadays that I can't keep track of them any more."

Pa was still talking when Gran'ma gathered up her cane and limped out, and in a moment Ma was gone. I hurried out as fast as I could, trying not to look at Susie. But I did; I couldn't help it. She was not crying, but kind of happy-looking, as if the struggle was over. After all these days of waiting

BOONE STOP

and putting it off and dreading, it had come suddenly. She would tell him herself.

In the sitting-room we could hear Susie talking—stopping and going on again—and then the heavy rumble of Pa's voice. Then Susie's thin voice. Up and down the room we could hear Pa's heavy foot and then the squeak of his chair.

Susie appeared at the door. Opening it for us to enter, she went back to her seat, as if she was a prisoner, and sat looking straight ahead, her hands between her knees.

Pa sat without taking his eyes off Susie, while she never raised hers. He did not shift or move, as he usually did on account of his rheumatism, just staring at her, the hazelnuts coming and going. Minute after minute he sat, while the old clock ticked on. I tried to think only of Pa but I couldn't help looking at the deer and the dogs on the frosted glass of the clock door. The dogs were leaping at the deer's throat while the deer kept looking where to turn. Suddenly I thought what it was like. The deer was Susie and the dogs were the people leaping at her. That was pretty good. Mid would never have thought of a thing like that.

"Let us pray," said Pa, and, bracing his hands on the chair, he began getting down on his knees. Slowly Gran'ma knelt and buried her face in the plush seat of the rocker, while Ma covered her face with her hands and bowed down in the cane-seat chair. Susie did not move, sitting motionless with her hands between her knees. There was no longer any place in heaven for her.

Pa's voice was broken and trembling. I was glad

BOONE STOP

he didn't start in asking love and mercy on the world and the benighted countries and gradually work down to the President the way he used to and finally on down to the family circle united around the throne of God. Instead of that he just began to talk to the Lord and ask Him to be merciful to the weak and to give him strength for the step that must be taken. I knew who he meant when he said the weak. He usually meant me, but now it was Susie; but when he said for the step that must be taken I did not know. I knew that it was a solemn moment but I couldn't keep my mind on it. Gradually I began to drift away from what he was saying and was thinking of something else, so that when he said "Amen" in a whisper I didn't know what he had been talking about. I had been thinking of Cleo and the lump on Merle's breast. I was glad nobody could read my thoughts; if they could they would never have anything more to do with me. I could never think about serious things the way I should. I was getting so I didn't think about fighting so much as I used to, but it wasn't much better. It was girls.

Straight and tall Pa stood before Susie, but she did not look up. She kept her eyes on her hands.

"Oh, my daughter! my daughter!" he said, like a verse from the Bible. "That thou shouldst bring this to mine house. I have always tried to keep it clean, and now dost thou besmirch it. How mine eyes have been blinded." Lifting his eyes he spoke to the Lord. "O Lord, how much longer? How much longer? Hast Thou not yet tested me in the fire of adversity? Hast Thou ever found me want-

BOONE STOP

ing? Hast Thou ever found me afraid to follow Thy course? Nor shalt Thou this time, O Lord."

Swallowing hard, he brought his eyes down to Susie. "Thou hast disobeyed the commands of God and man. Punishment shall be thine. Go. No longer shalt this house shelter thee."

Slowly Ma lowered her head and brought her hands to her eyes. A tear ran down her wrist and hung there. I wondered how she could stand it. It always tickled me and made me squidgy to be washing my hands and get water on my wrists. But Ma didn't notice.

With Gran'ma it was different. "You shall not drive her out," she said, getting up quicker than I had seen her in years. "What would she do? Where would she go?" She stood before him defiantly.

Pa did not answer quickly; not the way he usually did when some one defied him. Slowly he faced her.

"That is of little consequence. That which matters is over. Thy God is a just God. She shall go to-morrow."

"Why should she suffer alone?" demanded Gran'ma, her voice going higher. "Why should all the misery be hers? What about Getchell? Are you going to take no step to make him repay? Are you going to drive your own child out and let him go free?"

"He is in the hands of the Lord. Punishment shall surely be his. His time shall come, and then, O Lord, pity him."

Gran'ma started to speak again, but Pa held out

BOONE STOP

his hand, like the picture of the Saviour quieting the waves.

"She shall go to-morrow."

"Yes, Father," said Susie, softly, without looking up. "I understand. I will go to-morrow."

Spreading open the Bible on his knees, Pa drew the lamp over to his side of the table and began to read, taking no notice as one by one we slipped from the room.

When I came out the next morning Pa was waiting at the gate, making out that the latch needed fixing. It had been a long time since we had walked to work together. He seemed to lean on me more than he had before. It seemed strange for Pa to lean on any one—Pa, who had always been so strong and sure of himself.

When we came back that evening Susie was gone. Her room was not made up and I knew that it would never be. It was just as she had left it, with her old pair of slippers under the foot of the bed, the fastener torn off one of them and a picture of Ozy in a pyrography frame. A few days later the pyrography frame was gone, but who took it I don't know. Pa was up there pretty often. I could hear him going up after he came home from work, shutting the door behind him, and then after a bit I could hear his shoe soles squeak like when you double them up to get down on your knees. But he never mentioned her—no more than if she had never been in our family. Every day he would go up there and his shoes would squeak—especially on Sundays—but never a word did he say.

Pretty soon Gran'ma began getting letters from

BOONE STOP

Aunt Clara in Kansas City, but they always came addressed to Gran'ma. She would go out to meet the mail-man and then go up to Susie's room. But she never said anything about them to Pa. Less and less Gran'ma and Pa had to say to each other. She would help cook his meals and put his lunch up in the tin pail, but she wouldn't be out on the porch to meet him when he came home in the evening, the way Ma would.

XIV

We have fair week and Pa sees the Famous Queens of History and has to swallow pretty often. Madame Ristine comes out with fewer clothes on than ever and pretends that a gutta-percha snake bit her. Veve slides down the wire and I find Oscar weeping behind the Herefords.

IT was pretty lonesome getting along without Susie. I never paid much attention to Susie when she was with us—she was just my sister—but now that she was gone and there wasn't anybody to start us talking at the table, everything seemed kind of flat, like drinking beer that had been out in the alley a long time. It's that way with most people we love. We don't pay much attention to them when we have them and kind of forget to tell them how glad we are to have them around till it's too late and then we can't tell them. If it was all to do over again I would have treated Susie different and not have been so wrapped up in myself, but now it was too late. It generally is when we wake up to such things.

I was getting to be a pretty good beer-drinker. It didn't bite my tongue and get up my nose the way it used to. Every once in a while I would drop in

BOONE STOP

at No. 9 and talk to George and order a glass of beer and swirl it around to get the foam off the sides and take a pretty long drink without lifting my lips from the glass. If it got up my nose I wouldn't choke and blow it out the way I used to; I would just sniff a little and go on talking. Men standing right alongside me wouldn't know it. Then I would reach out my tongue and lick it off my lips like anybody else, and walk out the door and not look up or down the street to see who was passing. It didn't make any difference to me—only I would generally go in in the evening after prayer-meeting when Pa was at home. But if he had said anything to me I wouldn't have cared. I was getting so I could answer him back sharp enough.

Pa never mentioned Susie any more than if there wasn't any Susie, but he was taking longer walks than he used to. He would put on his hat and go out the gate, turn down the street toward the outside of town, with his limp showing pretty badly, and sometimes he wouldn't get back in time for supper. It wasn't often he missed a meal, because he was a good eater. If the meal was over when he came back he wouldn't go in the pantry and piece around the way you would think but would go into the parlor and turn the Bible open to where the silk bookmark was and read till everybody had gone to bed. Then he would set the chairs back so that if you got up in the night you would not run into them. But when I would go to bed last I would forget to set the chairs back, and then if a storm came up and Pa had to rush to the windows to put them down because the rain would blow in on the carpet he

BOONE STOP

would stumble into something and you could hear him all over the house. Then he would call me to ask when I would ever learn anything and I would have to pretend that I was asleep. I would draw my breath through the bottom of my nose, because that is the easiest way to make a snore, and not answer. By morning he would forget all about it—especially if he had read a chapter from the Bible before I got down. Pa would get mad pretty often but if you would keep away from him till he had time to read a chapter from the Bible you could get out of it pretty easily. But if he caught you while he was still mad, and hadn't had a chance to read a chapter, then he would give it to you right. Especially to me. He wouldn't do much to Mid. He would just whale him a few licks and then Mid would cry and promise never to do it again and that would be all there was to it. But I wouldn't cry and it took a long time to make me promise never to do it again and say that I was sorry. That was the kind of person Mid was; a few thumps and he would begin to blubber. He had never tasted a glass of beer in his life; he had never played a game of pool; he had never kissed a girl; he had never done anything. He might just as well have been dead.

At first it seemed pretty lonesome without Susie, but the nearer it got to fair week the less I thought about her and the more I began to think about Veve. After all, there was no girl like Veve. When she was a friend she was a real friend; she wouldn't go off to cheap plays with somebody else. She was not that kind.

County fair had always been a big day for Gran'-

BOONE STOP

ma, but now she wasn't much interested in it. Then she had always met all her old friends and seen the people she knew, but now she didn't buy a new dress or make over any of her clothes or anything. She would just sit around and look out of the window. Once in a while there would be tears in her eyes, but she never sent for a doctor.

The streets were decorated with all the telephone-poles around the Square wrapped in bunting and every feed-yard in town was filled with buggies pushed up close together with the tongue of one going under the back axle of another till they didn't take up much room. Up and down each side of the street were the booths and pretty good ice-cream they had, too. But if you spent your money on ice-cream and candy you wouldn't have any money left for the side-shows. That was where the real fun was. The side-shows were on the east side of the Square because that was where the lumber-yards and implement-stores were, and it wasn't as fashionable as where the nice drygoods-stores and drug-stores were. Some mighty good side-shows there were, too. Gran'ma couldn't stand to look at Bosco the Snake-eater but once; when he would go into a rage and kill the snake and bite a hunk out of its side she said it made her sick, but it didn't me. I would stay till the next performance. Sometimes it was a pretty long wait and the man out in front blacked up like a negro would have to sing a good many songs and play a good many pieces on his banjo to get another crowd up. But I didn't care. It was worth it. You can't get anything worth while without some trouble. By doing quite a bit of waiting I

BOONE STOP

could get to see two or three performances for the price of one. Watching Bosco bite out the hunk and swallow it didn't make me sick. There was hardly anything that would make me sick, unless it was overwork.

On the east side of the Square was where the Girl in Blue was. She hadn't any more than got her tent up than I knew about it. Mid never heard about such things till it was all over. Her tent was kind of by itself, so that the spieler could be confidential with the people going by. She was a good dancer, he said, and if you came in once you would come in again. He would be telling how she danced without many clothes on when he would see a woman going by, when he would stop and clear his throat and wink his eye till she got past. Then he would reach in his pocket and bring out a photograph of her. To see it you would have to crowd up close and then while you were looking he would put the photograph back in his pocket and say that it was only a dime, ten cents, the tenth part of a dollar.

Coming down the street I met Cleo. "Now," I said to myself, "is just as good time as any to show her that I don't care who she goes to mock trials with. I'll have Veve when she gets here."

Just as I started to speak she began to laugh and talk to the girl with her as if she had just thought of something important. I tipped my hat, but I didn't tip it very far. I just tipped it a little way and turned to look in the window at a cardboard donkey bucking a coon off, run by clockwork, as if speaking to her didn't mean anything to me. I would show

BOONE STOP

her that she could go to all the mock trials that she wanted to—it didn't make any difference to me. Let her go—there were plenty of other girls. Veve could lay it all over her, anyway. Some day when I got to be president of a mine, then she would be glad to speak to me. She would be glad enough to speak to me then, but it would be too late. Anybody could take lessons and learn to play a piano.

Cleo went into the candy-kitchen and had a lemonade. Once in a while I would walk by to see how near done she was, but I didn't let her see me. I watched so that just as she was coming out I met her at the door, but she didn't suspect because I let on that I didn't know that she was in there.

"Oh, were you in there?" I said. "Did you like it as well as you did at the mock trial?" With that I walked on. I didn't look back or anything; I just walked on. That would give her something to think about.

That afternoon I saw two ladies coming out of the Commercial House. They had changed a good deal but the moment I saw them I knew them. They were Madame Ristine and Veve. Madame Ristine was fatter and had a good deal of white on her face and led a little dog by a string. But I didn't stop to do much looking at her; I was looking at Veve. It didn't seem like her. I had been thinking of her as being about the same as she was in Rutherford, but she wasn't. She was taller and dressed more like a lady and her nose wasn't so stubby.

When I went to speak it made me dry in the mouth. I hadn't thought about that. I had supposed I could just walk up to Veve and speak to her

BOONE STOP

the way I would to anybody else, but I couldn't. It made me tremble.

"Hello!" I said.

Madame Ristine pulled back on the dog and looked me over. But she didn't know me. "How are the atavism bananas?" I said. I had studied that up to say, because I couldn't have thought of it just in a second that way.

"It's Cleve, Mamma, it's Cleve," said Veve. "Don't you remember him? It's him except he hasn't as many freckles as he used to have."

That was the way with Veve; she was always frank. When she thought a thing she said it.

"Bless my soul! Of course I do—up there where we went out for the world to come to an end. I nearly took my death of cold that day. I coughed around all winter like a horse with the heaves. Well, if this isn't like old times! Where are the rest of the folks? Where's the old man? Has he still got that succotash on his face?"

"Yes, he still has his whiskers, but he doesn't wear his brown clothes any more."

"That'll help a little. What's he doing in this burg? Did the Lord tell him to live here or is he just doing it because he wants to?"

Then I told her how the Lord had directed his finger and how we had come here.

"Who did you say directed his finger?" asked Madame Ristine.

"The Lord."

Madame Ristine looked around and kind of sighed. "I'd make sure of that," she said. "You know he might have got a wrong connection."

BOONE STOP

Where's Gran'ma and the rest of them? I'd like to see them."

"All right," I said. "Come on up to the house and meet them. I guess it 'll be a surprise to them."

"It couldn't be any more of a surprise to them than it was to me for you to step out of the ground in front of me. Lead me to them."

I got in the middle like a gentleman ought when he is walking with ladies and we started down the street through the flags and the crowds and everything. I was glad that I had learned some manners since Veve had seen me. She would see that I was getting to be somebody. If I had stayed in Rutherford and hadn't traveled around nor been a member of the Copus Club or anything, I'd never known how to conduct myself when I was with ladies. So I stepped between them and made them walk slow so that everybody would see me. I tried to chat lightly the way Red said, but it was pretty hard work to and at the same time to watch who was looking.

Pa was in the sitting-room with the Bible on his knees, his glasses pulled down over his eyes, his fingers following the lines. When I brought Madame Ristine and Veve in he looked up, with his finger holding the place as if it was somebody coming to be saved. But it wasn't; Madame Ristine had lost all interest in being saved. She was now devoting all her attention to the show business.

"Here's a sight for sore eyes," she said, rushing up to Pa and holding out her hands. "Don't know me, do you? I thought you didn't. But I would know those old whiskers anywhere. Well, put 'er there."

BOONE STOP

With that she took both of Pa's hands and began to work them up and down, while Pa tried to get them loose to fix his glasses so that he could see a little better.

"Don't you remember me—up there on the hill? You know I nearly lost a lung over that."

"It's the—the circus lady," said Pa, and turned to Ma, not knowing just exactly what to say. But when you were around Madame Ristine you didn't have to worry about that, because Madame Ristine could do all the talking that was necessary. Ma came into the room, wiping her hands on her apron and reaching up to see if her hair was over her ears right and shook Madame Ristine's hand kind of bewildered like but was going to do the best she could. She always did that way when Pa wanted her to do anything; she would do it and afterward find out what it was all about.

"This is little Veve. She was about as big as a temperance resolution then, but she's getting some meat on her bones now. Well, how's everybody? There's them stuffed canaries in that same old glass cage. I used to think about them and wish I was one of them—nothing to do but sit around on a limb and hold your head sideways. Do you get that?—me sitting on a limb. It would have to be about the size of a California redwood. But don't you think I look pretty good? I'm putting on meat all the time, but bar that and I am holding my own. Well, I'm glad to see you all again. Some good feeds I used to get out at your house. You know, when I get the blues all I got to do is to think of them old days back in that queen city of the prairies

BOONE STOP

and I get a laugh every time. Them was the happy days—me going bust nights with the pony and dogs—and trying to go to heaven afternoons.”

“This is indeed a surprise,” said Pa when he got a chance, pushing around chairs. “Indeed, we would be pleased to have you stay for supper, wouldn’t we, Mother? To what do we owe this unexpected visit?”

“Why, don’t you know? We’re putting on an aerial here this week, Veve and me. Don’t you read the bill-boards?”

“I believe I did, but I did not for the moment—the names—my mind is on so many other things these days. What is the nature of your entertainment, if I may ask?”

“It’s an open-air act. When I hit the asphalt with the pony-and-dog I got this up and it goes pretty well. I have a tableau called Queens of History and then I do some bar-work.”

“Indeed!” said Pa, but by the way he said it I knew that he didn’t know exactly what she meant. “Am I right from the title in supposing that it is of an educational or instructive nature?”

Madame Ristine blinked her eyes. “Yes, oh yes! I guess you might suppose that. But I didn’t call it that at first. I used to call it Poses Beautiful and Refined, but I find it goes better this way.”

“The queens of history were very unusual personages but nothing to compare with the great characters of the Bible. Where in all state or political history is there a character to compare with Ruth? Or Naomi? Or Esther? Or Mary Magdalene? Can’t you see her standing at the well, that

BOONE STOP

great, expressive face of hers filled with sadness? They were giants in those days. Have you ever thought of impersonating any of the Biblical characters? I should say that Ruth would be admirably suited for such presentation."

Madame Ristine looked at Pa kind of funny and said no she hadn't ever thought of it.

Pa turned to Ma the way he did when they had something to decide and asked kind of hesitatingly: "It occurs to me, possibly you would like to stay and have supper with us. We live very simply but maybe you can find enough—"

"Law, yes, we'll be tickled to stay! Take off your things, Veve. Sometimes when we used to hit a tank town and have to slap a hunk of cheese between a couple of crackers and call it a meal, I used to think of that country-cured ham you had back on the farm. Got any of that yet? You know I could go to heaven with a plate of that in my hand."

"I think possibly we have some. Haven't we, Ma?" Pa asked; but I could see that he didn't like to have heaven referred to that way. "It will be simple, you know, Mrs. Ristine."

"Don't you worry about that—all you got to think about is quantity."

While they were talking I led Veve into the parlor. Now that she was big and wore long clothes and didn't have freckles any more it was like getting acquainted with a stranger.

"What's this collection?" she asked, picking up the family album. It was a nice album, with red plush on both covers and the letter A in celluloid on the front so that you would know which was the

BOONE STOP

front of the book. "What are these people, anyway? Where did they come from?" But she didn't stop for me to answer. She was a good deal like her mother in being a fast talker. "Look at this one here with all those whiskers on his throat. Wouldn't it be cheaper to get a muffler?" I looked at it and it was Uncle Allen in Ohio. I had always heard Ma talk about Uncle Allen as if he was almost as good as Pa himself, but now standing up by the side of a table that way with his hand on a book and the whiskers just coming to the edge of his chin, he did look queer. I must not let her know that he was a relative of mine.

"Oh, that's just somebody we picked up. He came mighty near being a billy-goat, didn't he?" I said and laughed. I must keep her from knowing that it was Pa's brother. If she knew that she wouldn't have any use for me. She was a woman of the world and had traveled everywhere and didn't have any use for people who wore whiskers under their chin. "You know how they will get in," I said. "I guess somebody just left it here and Ma stuck it in."

"That's Uncle Allen," said Mid. "Ma says you're more like him than any other member of the family."

That was the way with Mid. He was always spoiling something. He didn't know anything about how to get ahead with girls. So I had to hem and haw and say: "Oh, that one! I thought you meant the other. Yes, that is Uncle Allen. He just wore that beard one winter; you know how people will do it once in a while—on a bet or something. I guess he's pretty well off now."

BOONE STOP

"You know he's not," blurted out Mid. "He's a shoemaker back in Ohio and it's about all he can do to make a living. Last Christmas Pa sent him five dollars and the Christmas before he sent him ten dollars."

I saw that I would have to get Veve away from Mid. He was always spoiling things. He did not know how to act before people who were above you.

"Here's another of him," said Mid, turning over a page to where there was a worse one yet. It showed Uncle Allen sitting down, with pretty high pants on and Aunt Ellen standing beside him with her hand on his shoulder. Uncle Allen had his hat in his hand and it was not much of a hat. There was a head-rest behind Uncle Allen, so that his chin was twisted around sideways as if he was going to speak to Aunt Ellen, and in this picture he had more whiskers than in the other one. Besides having the billy-goat whiskers he had sideburns, like a patent-medicine doctor. Down in one corner written in ink that had faded in places with the parts of the letters below the line made good and heavy, he had written, "Yours Truly, Allen F. Seed."

"That's the way he looked before Aunt Ellen died," said Mid.

"I guess it's the best thing she did," said Veve.

I must get her away from Mid. I could not be anybody in her eyes if he was to be there to blab everything he knew. "Would you like to go out for a walk, Miss Ristine?" I said. It sounded more like being polite to call her Miss Ristine than it did just Veve. A lady who had traveled the way she

BOONE STOP

had and who had her pictures on bill-boards must be treated politely.

"There's one in here of Cleve," said Mid, and I knew what he was going to show her. It was a baby picture of me lying in a wash-bowl on my stomach without a stitch of clothes on and trying to lift up my head and laugh. It was pretty silly-looking and especially without any clothes on. I thought I had hidden the picture but Gran'ma was always getting it out and putting it back in the album. It was enough to make anybody ashamed—even if you were not with a lady.

"Here it is," said Mid, and turned the album around for Veve to look at it.

"Please don't," I said, putting my hand over it. "I don't want you to see it."

"Why shouldn't I see it?"

"Because it—because it is awful."

"Ain't it of you?"

"Yes, but you see I'm not dressed—the way I am now."

"Of course you wouldn't be when you were a child."

"But I'm not a child—I'm a baby. Don't look."

"We've all been babies. I don't see why that should make any difference."

"But not babies like this. This baby—I haven't many clothes on."

"I don't care. I'm going to see it, anyway," and with that she tore my hand away, and there I was lying on my stomach with my head turned sideways, trying to look up and smile and no clothes on.

"I could tell it was you. You still got that same grin."

BOONE STOP

I didn't say anything more, and was glad enough to get her out in the yard to play croquet. Playing croquet was better than looking at the family album, even if Mid was along.

I supposed she could beat me, but she didn't. She wasn't as good a player as I thought she would be. It was all she could do to beat Mid. I guess she didn't get a chance to practise much, because she used to be able to do about everything better than I could.

I saw that she was never going to make a very good player, because when I got to the last wicket she got mad and sent her ball whizzing across the yard. She was all right when she was winning, but when anybody else began to get ahead of her she got mad pretty easily.

"Players who get to be champions never give up," I said, as nicely as I could, so as not to hurt her feelings. "They never give up till the other person hits the stake."

"Who'd want to be a croquet champion?" asked Veve.

I tried to think who would and I couldn't think of anybody. She was right about it. It didn't take Veve long to go to the bottom of things. I wouldn't study up any more fancy strokes; croquet-playing wasn't anything. It was all right for Mid and people that way, but to those who expected to be anybody it was nothing at all. I was going to be somebody; I had made up my mind to that. I would go away to school and study mining, and some day I would own one of those mines.

I would tell Veve that. When a good chance

BOONE STOP

came I would tell her about that. That would make her respect me. She would see that croquet wasn't anything to me. She would be a lady then; nothing to do but wash and go down to breakfast.

Madame Ristine was a good eater; being a famous queen of history didn't make her dainty in her appetite. She ate more like a hired girl.

"I could just die with a hunk of country-cured ham in my hand," said Madame Ristine, filling her fork. "And then whichever place they had this fried mush I would go. It wouldn't make any difference to me whether they had heat or harps. That would be where I would go."

Pa looked at her, but he didn't say anything. If it had been me he would have sent me away from the table, because he never let anybody laugh about going to heaven. Going to heaven was not to be joked about.

After supper was over we went down to the Square. Everybody was out, and the booths were all covered with bunting and they had let all the people come in from the poor-farm to have a good time. They stayed together because they didn't know anybody else and because they looked so funny with one leg shorter than the other or one hand withered up so that nobody else wanted to be with them.

"Le's not stand around with those sillies," said Veve while we were waiting for Madame Ristine to get ready. "Le's buy something."

Oscar, from the poor-farm, with his face twisted around to one side and one of his hands doubled up and pulled back in his sleeve, wasn't very good-

BOONE STOP

looking, but he couldn't help it. They didn't have much fun out on the poor-farm hoeing corn and pulling cuckleburs all day, and coming to the fair was a big thing to them. I didn't feel that way about them, but I guess it was because I was used to looking at them.

"They look awfully foolish. Come on, let's buy something."

While we were standing at the church booth having some ice-cream Oscar came up and stood pretty close, with his twisted hand drawn up, watching every bite we took. They didn't have ice-cream at the poor-farm very often; they usually had just potatoes and side-meat and corn bread. They didn't have ice-cream except when the Board came out to look them over and then usually somebody got in the freezer and made themselves sick.

"There's that silly following us," said Veve. "Let's get away from him." But Oscar didn't mean to follow us; he just couldn't keep away from where there was ice-cream.

When I led her away I had a hard time trying to keep her from stopping in front of another booth that had something to sell, so I had to talk fast and show her how we had put a new electric light over the court-house clock.

While we were standing there Oscar came pitching and stumbling and dragging his crooked foot toward us, looking straight at us and trying to smile. But it wasn't much of a smile because of the way his face was twisted around to one side. But instead of passing us on by, like I thought, he stopped and with his good hand held out something white.

BOONE STOP

"The lady dropped her handkerchief." With that he held it out farther and smiled. Veve reached for it, staying a good ways from him, like scratching a pig.

"Thank you," she said, but she didn't say it very enthusiastically. Then she pulled my arm and made me walk away with her while Oscar stood looking after us kind of wistfully, like he had expected something, I don't know what, and hadn't got it. Veve was not used to seeing such people, I guess.

The crowd was beginning to collect around Madame Ristine's platform, standing there, looking up at the velvet curtains where she was dressing, holding sacks of popcorn in one hand and reaching in and bringing it to their mouths without looking to see where the sack was. Some of them had taffy and would try to hold it fashionably with tissue-paper, but before they got through the paper would tear so they would have to lick off what they could and then wipe the rest off with their handkerchiefs.

"I thought I had seen some gawks," said Veve, "but this bunch lays it over anything I ever saw. I keep expecting somebody to come up and lead them off, but they never do. They just stand around with their mouths open and their Adam's apple going up and down, but no keeper ever comes."

Veve didn't understand our people very well. They were not gawks; a good many of them had store clothes, but I didn't say anything. I just let it go. She would understand them better after she got acquainted. If you ever wanted a friend

BOONE STOP

they would be one to you, no difference what happened, and that is a good deal.

On her platform was a hood with curtains around it for her to dress in so that the audience could not see her changing from one queen to another. She had a colored boy to hang up a sign that said what queen she was going to be, and then he would pull the cords, the curtains would part and there the queen would be.

There was a jam around the platform, but it didn't take Pa long to push through it because when he wanted a thing he usually got it. The crowd packed in closer and closer, eating popcorn and candy and shooting squawkers in each other's faces and saying: "Hello, Claude!" "Hello, Guy!" "What's your favorite queen?"

"All ready. Let her go," said one of the committee, coming around with a paper in his hand that told the time each act started. With that the colored boy hung out a sign that said "Mary Queen of Scots," and pulled the cord. The curtains spread, and there was Madame Ristine with a good many bustles and feathers and a golden crown on her head. Some of the points of the crown were mashed down so that I knew that it was not real gold. It was pasteboard covered with gold paint. I could see that, but I guess Oscar and some of them thought that it was real gold. Let them; it wouldn't hurt them to think so. But I couldn't be fooled.

Madame Ristine was sitting in a big canvas frame cut so that she would just fit in, and painted to look as if she was being carried off to prison. As she sat in the chariot being taken to prison she wiggled

BOONE STOP

and twisted with pain. Madame Ristine was good at that. Mary Queen of Scots herself couldn't have done any better twisting and wiggling than she did. If the real Mary Queen of Scots had wiggled and twisted as hard she might have got away or knocked some of the soldiers down.

"Close it," said Madame Ristine under her breath and the colored boy pulled the cords, the velvet curtains came together, and I could hear Madame Ristine putting the frame away and getting another ready.

The colored boy hung out another sign that said "Queen of Sheba," and the next part was ready. He pulled the cords and there was Madame Ristine sitting in a chair on poles borne by sweating black slaves. Of course there were no slaves there; they were just painted on the frame, but you could see what was meant. Some of the paint had rubbed off, so that one of the slaves didn't have any face, but the other one was all right. On her arms Madame Ristine had golden bracelets, but that was about all she did have on. The Queen of Sheba didn't wear very many clothes; she seemed to depend just on jewelry and on some things around her waist, but Madame Ristine didn't seem to notice. She seemed to think that she had on all that was necessary, but Pa didn't. He began to shift his feet, turning his head toward Ma to see what she thought, and swallowing. Pa was pretty well read, but he never expected the Queen of Sheba to look like that.

"Close it," said Madame Ristine under her breath again, and the curtains came together. There was a shifting of scenery and on the nail the colored boy

BOONE STOP

hung another sign that said "Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt."

"Let 'er go," said Madame Ristine and the colored boy pulled the cords. The curtains parted and there was Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, lying back on her throne on a boat on the Nile. You could tell it was the Nile because the name was painted on it under some bulrushes. The boat curled up in front and on it was painted a picture of a slave with earrings fanning with a long-handled peacock fan, but to look at Cleopatra you would not think she needed fanning because she didn't have much on. I thought the Queen of Sheba didn't have much on, but she was pretty heavily dressed by the side of Cleopatra. Cleopatra had on the same jewels the Queen of Sheba had, except they had been changed around in different places. You would not think that a country would let its Queen go out that way and especially on the river where everybody could see her.

Pa's lips began to twitch and he began to swallow faster and faster and to lift his hand as if he was going to say something; but Madame Ristine paid no attention to him. She went right on with Cleopatra. She was bowing and stretching out her arms as if she was ensnaring Cæsar. Reaching down into what the people thought was the bottom of the boat she picked up a gutta-percha snake and began twisting it around her arm and around her neck and holding it against her cheek. But the snake would suddenly fall limp because there was a break in the middle and it wouldn't hold itself straight like she wished.

"Woman, what do you mean?" called Pa, pushing

BOONE STOP

up to the edge of the platform. "This is an outrage against decency."

But Madame Ristine didn't pay any attention. She was pretending that she was coaxing the snake to bite her and sticking her finger at it and squeezing on its neck so that the snake would open its mouth. But its mouth would not work very well. Sometimes its jaw would drop down so that Madame Ristine would have to take her hand and shut it before she could go on. After gutta-percha snakes get out of order once they never work very well again.

"Do you hear me?" called Pa, still louder. "Stop this at once. This is the work of the devil."

"I can't," said Madame Ristine, poking her finger at the snake and talking out of the corner of her mouth to Pa. "This is my big scene and I've got to go through with it."

Just as she said that the snake bit her and she began wiggling and twisting. The snake-bite began to take effect and she began to die. It began to take effect quicker than you would think; the snake hadn't any more than bit her than she began to twist and wiggle; it did not take several hours the way our snakes did. I guess they did not know about whisky then.

"You shall stop this outrageous display," said Pa, going up the steps and standing over Madame Ristine, his neck stiff and his lips in a straight line. "If you have no shame for yourself, I have for you. Get into your clothes."

"But—" said Madame Ristine, as if she was going to argue. But no one ever argued with Pa.

BOONE STOP

"Get into your clothes," he said. Madame Ristine looked at him a moment and then began to back off. She had seen something in his eye. "This moment."

With that Madame Ristine stepped in the hood and Pa pulled the cords. By the side of the hood Pa stood, his chin in the air and his lips in a straight line. No one laughed because when Pa was stirred up it was no time to laugh. Tall and commanding he was, standing there by the curtains, doing something because he had the courage to do it. Pa was not afraid that the people were going to laugh at him. He was not that kind. When he thought that a thing ought to be done he would go ahead and do it. What people thought made no difference to him. He was not much of a person to worry about what other people thought.

Then he began to talk. "It is by such undignified and shameless sights that we lose our feeling for the finer things of life," said Pa. "To have a high ideal and to keep to it we must hold an unwavering course. Sometimes it is hard to do; sometimes it takes courage. To do what you know to be right, whatever the cost, takes character, and that is what we want—character. That is the greatest thing in the world. Everything is built on it. It is the pearl of great price."

Pa could make a good speech. If he had been a politician or something he would have been a big man. Standing up there before all those people didn't scare him or make him nervous; it would have me, but it didn't him. He never seemed to think about himself; he was more interested in his

BOONE STOP

subject and in saying something that would help somebody to form character.

After a while Madame Ristine came out in a faded bathrobe and without looking at Pa went off toward the Commercial House. The announcer got upon the platform and said where the next thing was to take place and the crowd began to thin out. But I guess Veve didn't like what had happened very well, because when we went to the other side of the Square to see the Peerless Sword-swallower Veve held her head pretty high and didn't pay much attention to the people on the street. When one of the boys would come up and blow a screecher till it unrolled and squawked in her face she wouldn't laugh and throw confetti or try to tickle him with a feather duster; she would grab his screecher and try to jerk it out of his mouth. And when anybody would come up and blow a horn in her ear she wouldn't jump and say, "Oh, you mean thing!" Instead of that she would turn and try to knock it down his throat.

"These rubes make me tired," she said. "Can't we get away from them?"

So I took the hint and invited her down to the candy-kitchen. "Country jays always did give me a pain," she said. "Don't they give you one, too?"

"Yes," I said, "they do. That's all they think about—getting out and hitting somebody with a rubber ball or throwing confetti down your throat while you are laughing. I just come because Mid and the rest of them like to." I would show her that I was different from the rest of the people in Boone Stop. She didn't have to say much till I

BOONE STOP

could see just what kind of people they were. They hadn't ever traveled or been anywhere the way she had. Veve was traveling all the time and seeing people every day. The people in Boone Stop never went anywhere except to Kansas City once in a while and sometimes to Chicago, or to New York twice a year to buy things. They didn't travel all the time the way Veve did.

"Sure, they are pretty common," I said, "but I have to put up with them while I am in Boone Stop. Once I get away from here I won't pay any attention to them."

It made everybody look when we went into the candy-kitchen because Veve had a way about her. It didn't take people long to see that she was somebody. She didn't just take the first table we came to; she looked them all over and if there were circles or anything on the table she wouldn't sit down and when she did she wiped the top of the table off with a paper napkin, like you would at a hotel.

"Le's see your card," said Veve and kind of sighed as if she knew already there wasn't going to be anything on it worth while.

"We might as well look at it," I said. "You can't expect much in a place like this."

The place did seem pretty small; it wasn't like Kansas City places Veve was used to. I gave the bill to her like you should to a lady and she handed it back to me and smiled a little. Not much, but I could see that there wasn't anything on it that a lady of the world would want.

When Grace Langan, who was waiting on the table,

BOONE STOP

came up Veve lifted her nose and handed Grace the card, meaning for Grace to get it out of her sight. I could see that she didn't think much of Grace. Grace just lived at home and went to school and once in a while helped in the candy-kitchen; that was all there was to Grace. She did not get to travel around any. It wouldn't do to let on to Veve that I knew Grace very well.

"Have you got any ice-cream parfay?" asked Veve, making the words pretty short.

"What kind?" asked Grace, bending over a little closer.

"Ice-cream parfay," said Veve, faster and shorter than the first time.

"I don't know—I'll ask," said Grace and walked up to one of the Greeks who owned the store. "We have strawberry, vanilla, chocolate, and raspberry," said Grace when she came back.

"I want parfay."

"We haven't any kind except what I mentioned."

"Well, bring me some raspberry," said Veve and leaned back and sighed. It was pretty hard on her not to have the kind she was used to. But she ate it better than you would think; she scraped the bottom clean and then leaned back and sucked the spoon dry.

While we were eating and Veve was telling me how people liked her act, and how there wasn't anybody better than she was, Cleo came in with Bess Crane. I leaned over and began to talk to Veve as if I was excited and whenever Veve said anything I would laugh, and when she dropped her handkerchief I wouldn't just lean over and pick it up; I would get

BOONE STOP

up and push back my chair and walk around the table and pick it up with the ends of my fingers and hand it to her. While I was walking around I would turn my eyes to see if Cleo was looking, but I wouldn't let her see me do it. I was too slick for that. And then I would come back and sit forward on my chair and lean across the table to be as near Veve as I could. When I talked I talked pretty loud and when Veve said anything about this town I would say the same thing only more so. Then without pretending to be doing so I would lead Veve on to say something more about hick towns she had played in and she would always end up by saying that Boone Stop was the worst.

"What do you think of Kansas City?" I asked pretty loud.

Veve turned up her nose a bit. "It's got some points," said Veve, "but you know how hilly it is."

Red Milligan had never said anything about that, but I wasn't going to let on. So I said, yes, it was, as if a hilly town wasn't any attraction to me. I didn't use the words but I just as much as said that I wouldn't live in a hilly town. A town had to be just right or I wouldn't have anything to do with it. It wouldn't be long till I got out of Boone Stop and when I came back it would be only to dedicate something or to give them a library. I kind of turned my head as if I was looking for the waitress and I saw that Cleo was pretending not to listen but I knew she was because she was eating slowly and not talking any. Let her go to mock trials with Merle Sewell if she wanted to. I would show her that I had plenty of other lady friends.

BOONE STOP

"How do you like Chicago?" I asked.

"Uummm!" said Veve, putting her toes together and kicking up her feet so as to lift her up and down on the chair. "Now you're talking. That's the only place to live—street-cars and parades and lots of people and any kind of ice-cream you want. Kansas City is all right but it 'ain't got the people Chicago has."

"That's right," I said. "Not many people in Kansas City—nothing but hills."

Veve could describe Chicago well. I hadn't known before that she had ever been there, but I could see by the way she mentioned the people and the parades and the streets and everything that she had.

"I guess they have some mighty fine parades in Chicago," I said.

"They sure do. And millionaires. The town is full of them. Are there any millionaires in Boone Stop?"

"No," I said, and kind of blew through my nose. "There never was a millionaire here. A millionaire never even passed through here that I know of. What would a millionaire be doing in Boone Stop, I'd like to know? He'd be sick—that's the only reason I can think of why he'd be here."

"He'd be sick, anyway, after he had been here awhile," said Veve and laughed, and I laughed, too. That was what we thought of Boone Stop; it wasn't anything alongside of Chicago. That was where we belonged—Chicago, where they had street-cars and parades and any kind of ice-cream you wanted and lots of people. That was real living—not just moping around in a one-horse town and go-

BOONE STOP

ing to mock trials. It wouldn't be long till I would be in a city that way and riding around in street-cars and watching parades and being one of the fine-dressed people. I wasn't always going to stick around Boone Stop. That was one thing sure.

"I guess you play Chicago pretty often," I said, turning the corner of my eye toward Cleo. That would show her who Veve was. It wasn't everybody who could associate with an actress the way I could.

"Sure," said Veve. "We don't think anything about Chicago. Mamma says if things go right we're going to hit New York inside of a year."

That was something . . . being an actress in New York . . . rich people admiring her and asking her to their homes. Playing a piano wasn't anything. Nothing at all. Anybody could hammer off a few tunes on a piano.

When Cleo stood up to go I looked at her in surprise, the way I can do. "Oh," I said, "are you here? Miss Chambers, I want you to meet my friend. I have known her a long time."

I didn't say any more. Let her worry about it. It didn't make any difference whether people went to mock trials with me or not.

"Do you live here or are you from somewhere?" asked Veve, opening her wrist-bag and taking out her chew of gum.

Cleo looked kind of strange. "I live here. We think it is a pretty nice place—especially after we get the street to the Chautauqua Grounds paved."

"No doubt it will be just lovely then. It will be more like Chicago. In Chicago all the streets are paved."

BOONE STOP

"She goes to all those places, you know," I said. "Miss Ristine is an actress."

"Oh, I see! May I ask, what are you playing in? I love shows."

"I'm not in a show. I'm trooping it with Mamma. We are the Flying Ristines, you know."

The way Veve said it you could tell that anybody who didn't know who the Flying Ristines were didn't amount to much. But it didn't seem to make any difference to Cleo that she didn't know who the Flying Ristines were.

"That is the name of the play, or something that way?" asked Cleo. It was hard for her to understand.

"No, I wouldn't go with a show—always somebody bossing you around. I always turn them down when they come around wanting me to go with 'em. I'd rather work single. That's what I am doing now—singling on the wire."

"I see. You are not acting. You are walking a wire or something."

"It's better than acting," said Veve.

"Yes, she travels all around," I said. "She goes to Chicago and everywhere."

"Do you know many people in Chicago?"

"Quite a few," said Veve, turning her eyes around as if she was about through with the conversation.

"Maybe you know my uncle then — Papa's brother," said Cleo, "Eli Chambers. He's a millionaire, but you would never know it to see him around. He always makes you have such a good time when you visit at his house."

I didn't know that Cleo knew any millionaires.

BOONE STOP

I had heard her mention him, but I didn't know that Uncle Eli was a millionaire like you read about in the papers. But she was not much of a person to brag.

"I don't believe I do," said Veve, turning her eyes off and looking around more than ever. "Has he lived there long?"

"He's never lived anywhere else. I used to live there when I was little, but Papa didn't like it. He said that there were too many people. So he brought us out here where it was quiet and where people were friendly and nice. He says he wouldn't trade one day in Boone Stop for a week in Chicago."

"Some people like it and some don't," said Veve. "Well, I got to dress. Hope to see you again."

With that Veve went out swinging her wrist-bag, not looking back over her shoulder or anything. And as I walked down to the Commercial House with her for her to get ready for her performance she didn't have as much to say as she did while we were having our ice-cream. She didn't seem to like Cleo.

When Veve came out she had a good deal of paint on her face and a bathrobe. The bathrobe was more frayed and the rope around the middle had more knots in it than you would think an actress would have. She had the paint on her face to make her look better when she performed. When you were a good ways off she looked all right, but when you were up close the way I was she seemed kind of artificial.

Everybody was waiting for the slide for life, crowding around and watching the top of the building where the high end of the wire was fastened. Some

BOONE STOP

of them were eating peanuts and some of them were paring apples with the peeling hanging down in twists and curves till it got too thin and broke. Veve was right. They did look pretty gawky. They were all from the country and thought it was something wonderful to come to town and stand around awhile looking at things before they went home. I had once been one of them; but that was a long time ago. Then it seemed wonderful to me to wash an apple and to come to town and stand around and eat it, or maybe buy a sack of peanuts, but it didn't any more. I now lived in the city and took actresses out to a café and spent my money on them. I kind of liked to stand there and look at the crowd and think how far I had come. I was getting so I liked to look at other people and think how much better I was.

I walked up to where the low end of the wire was, pretending to be examining it as if I wanted to make certain that it was fixed right and wouldn't come loose. By the way I acted they could tell that she was a friend of mine. It would make the rest of them pretty jealous when they were cheering her and she turned to me to see if I was pleased. I would say it was a good slide, Veve, and they would see how well I knew her. Then we would walk off up the street together. I would be somebody then. I would tell George in No. 9 all about it and refer to it pretty often and call her Veve.

There was a good deal of waiting to do and then all of a sudden out of the night shot two balls of fire coming down to us like falling stars about to hit the earth. It was Veve. She had a strap in her

BOONE STOP

mouth and was hanging on by her teeth with a fire-brand in each hand. Zzzzzzzz—she came down the wire, the pulley whizzing along like a change-carrier in a drygoods-store except faster. Faster and faster she came, hanging there straight and still, with one foot hooked over the other and hands out so that the coal-oil from the torches wouldn't get on her. It was exciting. Before you could say a word she was down. It didn't look much like flying because there wasn't any waving or flapping; it was more like dropping, but they called it flying on the posters because it sounded bigger. That was to impress the country gawks who had never been around and didn't know much.

Just as her feet touched the ground something happened. As she was running along trying to stop herself because she was going pretty fast, Oscar came out of the crowd toward her, pitching forward each time he stepped because of his bad foot. Running up he threw his good arm around her and stopped her.

"Did it hurt you, lady?" asked Oscar.

Veve squirmed around in his arm till she could see his face all twisted around to one side, then she pushed him from her. "Of course I'm not hurt, you silly," she said. "Get out of my sight." With that she gave Oscar a push and he went stumbling over his bad foot.

"I didn't want to see you hurt, lady," said Oscar, reaching over and picking up his hat and holding it under his right arm while he dusted it off. "I don't want to see any lady hurt. I just thought—"

"You spoiled it all, you silly!" said Veve in a

BOONE STOP

pretty loud voice, only she didn't call him just silly again. She put some words in front of it. It was some of the words she had learned from Fino. I didn't know that anybody except Red Milligan and George and I knew them. She didn't stop when she said them but followed Oscar as he tried to push through the crowd, while she stamped her foot and kept on saying them till Oscar was out of sight. When Oscar was gone and Veve stopped and we began to look at her instead of listen to what she was saying, she didn't seem to have many clothes on. The picture was right about what she had on; there wasn't much of anything except a pair of tights that should have been darned around the seams and the belt the poster showed.

Pushing past the people and not paying any more attention to them than if they hadn't been there, she put on her faded bathrobe and started down the street toward the Commercial House. It would have been a fine time to show people how well acquainted I was with actresses only I didn't feel like walking down the street with her with everybody looking because Oscar meant well and I don't think she should have used swear words that way. Swear words don't help any and people don't think any more of you just because you use them. I wished Veve hadn't used them because I don't like to hear ladies swear. It may seem kind of exciting at the time, but afterward I always wish they hadn't.

I looked around for Oscar but couldn't find him for quite a while. I felt sorry for him; I didn't care if he wasn't very smart and had a twisted face, he meant well. He didn't have many friends in the

BOONE STOP

world. It wasn't much fun for him to come to town because all the boys would follow him around and shoot their potato-guns at him and laugh. At last I found him down behind the Hereford cattle leaning over the fence wiping his eyes with the back of his good hand. I didn't say anything about what had happened; I just began to talk about Herefords and asking him if he would rather have them than Pole Anguses and pretty soon he quit wiping his eyes, because Oscar would have been as smart as anybody if he had had a chance. Then I made him laugh by telling him how I had seen a city lady try to milk a muley on the left side. Then I said, "Come on up to the candy-kitchen with me and have some ice-cream." When Oscar's eyes got big I jingled the money in my pocket to show him that I had plenty and then I took him to the table where Veve and I had been, and Oscar held his hat under his short arm and began eating as fast as he could, because it wasn't often Oscar got ice-cream. So I slipped my hand in my pocket without letting on and counted my money to see if I had enough and I had, so I ordered another dish apiece for us. Oscar began to talk, and I was surprised. Oscar knew a good deal. He couldn't read much, but he would raise tobacco for some of the lame ones at the poor-farm and then they would read to him, and he had learned a good deal. It was pretty hard for Oscar to hold the handle of the hoe with one hand, but as long as he was able to get somebody to read to him he didn't mind it. Oscar had saved up his money to spend it fair week, but a little girl who had been sent to the poor-farm was going to have a birthday and she was

BOONE STOP

afraid she wouldn't get any store present so Oscar had taken his money and bought the best doll at the New York Racket Store and had put it in the hay in the bottom of the poor-farm wagon to have as a surprise for her.

While we were sitting there somebody brushed by the table, knocking the card on the floor, and I looked up and it was Veve. She was going by with her head up. She had put on her street clothes, but there was still a good deal of white on her face.

"I want some hot chocolate and I want it quick," said Veve so that people at other tables turned around and stared at her. When Veve was mad she always talked louder than was necessary.

"Excuse me a minute," I said to Oscar and got up and went over to her table.

"That's all right," said Veve, not telling me to sit down or anything. "Don't pay any attention to me. Let me walk to the hotel alone. Let that gawk break up my act and then take him out and feed him. Let him make a fool of—"

"But—" I started to say, but Veve made her voice go up higher than ever and kept on talking faster and saying that I wasn't satisfied at letting him break up her act, but that I must make a hero of him while I stood with my hand on the curved brass rod that made a back for the chair, waiting to say something but she never gave me a chance.

"Go back to him, why don't you?" she said. "If he's so handsome why don't you go back to him? Don't let me keep you. Go right on back to him!"

She was saying the same things over and over and everybody was just playing with their spoons

BOONE STOP

and pretending to eat, but they were not. They were listening.

"I ain't good enough for you. You want some stylish person like that silly-mouthed thing. Well, go back to him. I don't want to keep you, I'm sure."

With that I straightened up and looked at her. "Well, I will go back to him," I said, "and I'll stay."

With that I walked straight back and sat down at the table and began talking to Oscar. Pretty soon she got up and walked to the door with her heels coming down hard on the linoleum and slammed the door till it rattled. But I didn't care. Let her go; she wasn't the girl I used to think she was. It was all right to whistle on your fingers and turn cart-wheels, but after you got older you saw that turning cart-wheels wasn't everything.

I didn't pay any attention to her during the rest of fair week, and when she went away I did not care. When Oscar told me how happy the little girl was when she got a store present and how she could hardly go to sleep that night I was real pleased. Saturday night he brought the little girl in to the carnival and walked up and down the street with her holding her hand in his good one. She didn't care if nobody would walk with Oscar; she would. Oscar was just as big to her as the President of the United States was to some people. Late at night, when she was getting pretty tired out and couldn't hold her doll any longer, Oscar put it under his short arm and clamped it tight to keep it from falling and carried it the rest of the time. When the whistles began to blow at midnight and the fair was

BOONE STOP

over and everybody was starting home, Oscar took the little girl on his other arm and started toward the poor-farm wagon. It was kind of hard walking with one foot turned in that way, and he would pitch along and look as if he was going to fall, but he never did.

XV

The Never Fail caves in and the doctors come with their oxygen-machines and I get out of work for a while. Pa and Shug Leffler come together and Pa's breast heaves.

THE first few days after the fair was over I thought a good deal about Veve, but I didn't care if she had gone. She waited at the Commercial House the last night as if she expected me to go down to the depot on the 'bus with her, but I didn't. Veve wasn't the girl I thought she was. You can never tell how a person is going to turn out when they're little. It's interesting to look back and see how people change as you go along. Some go up and some go down and some just live at home and eat in the kitchen. A few days afterward I got a picture post-card of Maine Street looking north from where she was playing, with her address on it, but I tore it up. I had had all of Veve I wanted. If I ever married it would be to a different kind of lady. I would marry one that was more musical.

I had my own troubles to think of. It just seemed to me that I wouldn't any sooner get out of one trouble than something else would come along. There was always something wrong. If it wasn't

BOONE STOP

Veve it was Mid or pimples or something. Now I had lost Cleo. Every time I would go down the street I would see Merle Sewell driving her around in his rubber-tired buggy, with a laprobe over the back of the seat and red tassels under his horses' throats.

The days without ever going to the Chambers home were pretty long.

Then it was that the mine accident happened.

It was just after eleven o'clock that the gong sounded and when we came running up the tub-hooker was shaking as if a bucket had just missed him.

"There's been a cave-in at the Never Fail," he said. "It's got a lot of the boys. Everybody has been called."

In a moment the steam-drills had stopped, with only the sound of heavy shoes running over the stones and rocks and splashing through the water in the low places. On top, the hoists had stopped, the crusher was quiet, the jigs were silent, and the sludge-table was no longer rattling.

Everybody was running toward the Never Fail. Some stayed on the sidewalk paths, with the tailings crunching under their feet, but most of them took to the middle of the street.

One moment I would be glad that something exciting had happened and the next I would think of the men caught in the cave-in two hundred feet in the ground and I would feel ashamed of myself. "It might have happened to you," I kept telling myself so that I wouldn't feel so glad that I had got out of work for a while.

BOONE STOP

Out of the miners' boarding-houses the men came, still pulling up their suspenders, and asking who was caught and which drift it was and how was the water. But no one knew. The ground boss had gone down again to direct the shovelers, but soon word came up that five men were caught. The walls had been dug too thin so that the weight of the waste water and sludge above had broken through with a rush and a roar that fifty yards away had swept men off their feet. One of them had his clothes whipped into rags by the force of the wind. Into the drift had come an avalanche of mud, sludge, boulders and water, trapping the men in the sump.

It was so exciting that I breathed through my mouth, rushing from one group to another as word was brought up from the first rescue crew, and when some new man from a mine on the out edge of the belt would come and want to know the news, I would tell him and watch to see how excited he became. Then I would throw in what I thought and that would make him grow more excited than ever.

One by one the names of the men came up. "Joe Gap is one of them." I knew him a little, but not very well. But when I began to tell people about him I seemed to know him pretty well. You were somebody when you knew one of the trapped miners.

"Ozy Getchell is another." But I didn't tell how well I knew him. I knew I should feel sorry for him down there crushed in the earth, maybe dead, but I wasn't. "I hope they will get him out before he dies—but not very long before," I said, and then I felt ashamed of myself.

BOONE STOP

The Ladies' Aid began putting up a cook-shanty and driving stakes for tables. Hot meals and coffee were served to workers, but if you came around when a crew came out of the ground they wouldn't know you from the rest and would give you something to eat, too. You didn't have to ask for it; if you just stood around for a while and kept looking at the victuals they would offer some to you.

The second day it was more exciting. The mine rescue-car arrived and was put off on the siding, while the nurses in their uniforms and the doctors in white got out their oxygen-machine with its rubber tubes and white handles and made things ready, but every time they saw you they would shut the door, so to see anything you had to slip up quietly.

At the end of every four hours, night and day, the shift would come up, spattered with mud, while another crew with its captain would go down. Then the men would drop on the benches at the tables and gobble down the things the ladies handed out to them.

While they were eating, people would crowd around and ask what they thought of the men's chances. Shug Leffler didn't mind telling them and he didn't mind talking about himself.

"Well, now, if you want to know what I think about them being alive or not, I'll tell you. I guess I ought to know if anybody does. I just been down there for four solid hours. And this ain't the first mine explosion I worked in, either. Some of you may recollect I was pit boss down at the Klondyke when they shaved the pillars too thin and the whole

BOONE STOP

thing went down. I carried out four of them myself. Jim Pinneo saw me do it with his own eyes. Is Jim here?" Shug knew he wasn't, but he wasn't going to leave any doubt in anybody's mind. "Well, as I was saying, if my judgment counts for anything, I say they are alive. They ought to hear us digging by this time. I calc'late we ain't more than ninety feet from them."

Pa was the other way. When he came out of the ground after his four-hour shift he wouldn't say anything except tell how many feet they had made and how the timbering was holding. He would let Shug do the talking. He would get a few bites to eat and a cup of coffee and then somebody would drive him home in their buggy to rest up for the next shift. Harder than any of them he worked, coming out with his beard tangled and muddy, but paying no attention to himself. Almost as young and as strong he seemed as when he defied the railroad men. I couldn't help admiring him and wishing I hadn't said the things to him I had. I was always feeling that way about Pa. I would do something and get mad and not care what I said, then when I saw him making some big sacrifice I would feel how mean and ungrateful I had been.

I would feel excited and glad in spite of myself that something had happened to break the monotony until I would look at Mrs. Gap sitting on a fuse-box, with little Irene playing around her, waiting for news, sometimes lifting her head to ask if they had any tappings yet, and then I would feel sorry. Joe had been sick the day before and hadn't gone to work, and then the day he had gone the mine had

BOONE STOP

caught him. It was pretty tough that the day he had stayed away nothing had happened and then the day he came back he should get caught. Joe was a good pool-player, too.

When I would see Mrs. Gap's hands in her lap as if somebody had dropped them there, I would pray that Joe would be saved. But I knew that my prayer wasn't going to do much good—the Lord had just about lost faith in me.

When I went up to the cook-shanty with a crew on the fifth day to hang around while they were getting something to eat, I found Cleo there. She had on her apron and was helping the ladies serve things. She looked mighty pretty with her hair done up fancy, leaning over the pots and pans and tasting this and that and sticking a fork in the wieniewursts to see if they were done. There wasn't any white on her face the way there was on Veve's, but she looked just as nice. I began thinking up how I could make an impression on her. It seemed to me that every time I came around a girl I wanted to show off some way or other. I used to want to show how I could whistle or turn cart-wheels or skin cats, but now I wanted to show how smart I was. Just as soon as I would come around I would begin to talk loud and try to say funny things. So I began to talk to Jim Pinneo and some of them and tell what I thought about this and what I thought about that, and it wasn't very long till I saw that I knew a good deal more about it than anybody else. If they would just follow my way it wouldn't be long till we would have all the men out.

"Oh, howdy do, Miss Chambers?" I said, as if I

BOONE STOP

had just seen Cleo and didn't know that she had been there all the time. "I'm glad that you have come out because we need all the help that we can get." That kind of showed that things were in my hands and that I appreciated anything anybody would do to help the work along.

"Did you just get there?" said Cleo and then went on talking with some of the women about sandwiches. I kept waiting for her to finish and thinking up what I would say to her, but as soon as she was done she had to talk to somebody else and when she was through she had to begin paring potatoes. I felt pretty foolish hanging around, letting on that I was driving in the tacks to hold the oilcloth on the boards or scattering some tailings over a wet place, so I began to talk to some of the others. I began to talk as if I was one of the men doing the shoveling except my turn hadn't yet come to go down with a crew. Only the oldest and fastest shovelers were being called, but I would let on that I was one of them. So I began to talk about how hard we were working to rescue the men, with the water and slime to our waists and our miners' sunshine lamps going out. I began to feel as if I was doing it about all. But Cleo didn't pay any attention to me; she just went on working and getting things ready without ever looking toward me, so I raised my voice and talked a little louder. I began to tell how well I knew the men who had been caught in the mine and after I had been talking a bit they seemed to be my best friends. It was an honor to know the men caught in a mine when everybody all over the state was excited over them. The papers had their

BOONE STOP

names and would run a picture of them that looked like one of somebody cured of something and say, "Joe Gap, another of the entombed miners." Then I would look at it and say, "Yes, that looks like him except he has cut his mustache off." Then I would tell what a good pool-player Joe was and how he had always said that he expected to be caught in the ground some day. It wouldn't be long till I would have them all listening to me, all except Cleo. She didn't pay any attention.

I waited till Cleo was standing by herself, then I went up to her and asked, kind as if I was boss of things and still trying to be polite: "Do you think we have enough for them to eat? You know it's mighty hard work down there digging against time?"

"I think we have everything except one."

"What is that?" I asked, as if I wouldn't be too strict because the women were working under difficulties.

"We haven't any ice-cream parlay. You can't get any here. I suppose we will have to go to Chicago for it. They have everything in Chicago. The paving is lots better there than it is here. Boone Stop paving doesn't amount to anything. And the town doesn't, either—not alongside Chicago. No people here at all—just a few thousand. That is all. And no street-cars for them to ride in. Just carriages and surreys. That's all. And nothing ever going on—no parades or anything. You must get awfully tired of Boone Stop, Mr. Seed."

"You don't understand," I said. "I didn't mean anything like that, Cleo."

"No, I don't understand, Mr. Seed. I haven't

BOONE STOP

ever traveled around, so naturally I don't understand. People living in small towns this way don't amount to anything."

It hadn't done me any good to call her Cleo.

"Yes, they do," I said. "I'll tell you a fact—I'm glad she's gone. She was an old friend of the family and I had to pay some attention to her while she was here. You know how it is."

But Cleo didn't seem to know how it was. "I never noticed the family around with you. Does the rest of the family like Chicago, too?"

"I tell you the truth when I say I don't think she has ever been to Chicago in her life."

"She knew all about the streets and the parades and about lots of people being there. I thought she described Chicago very well. Do you expect to go to Chicago soon?"

"No, I wouldn't go there. I'd go the other direction. That's how much I think of Chicago," I said, but I made it mean Veve, too.

"To Kansas City, then?"

"No, I don't want to go anywhere. Boone Stop's growing all the time. It's going to look pretty nice when they get the band-stand done."

"It would be nice to have somebody dedicate it—"

"Yes, it would," I said, not seeing what she was leading up to.

"—with a slide for life. A good many people seem to like them."

She had got me in a trap. While I was thinking up what to say there was a shout and everybody began running toward the shaft. The men had been

BOONE STOP

rescued. The ladies came hurrying from the cook-shack and everybody began crowding around the shaft to see the men brought up. The coil began winding on the drum and up came Joe Gap, tied on a stretcher, his beard looking as if he had made an election bet. Mrs. Gap came pushing through the crowd, crying and thanking the Lord.

"Steady there, boys! steady there!" said the doctor.

The engine stopped chugging and began to purr. The stretcher swung over the side and two men, getting under it, ran with short, fast steps to the ambulance. Joe had turned his shirt wrong side out and had tied his leather watch-chain around his wrist to show, if help came too late, that he had not died suddenly.

The engine began to chug again and another stretcher came up, and another.

"We've got them all but one," a voice shouted up the shaft, like talking in a flour-barrel. "It's Ozy Getchell."

All had been rescued except Ozy. He had been further up the drift by himself. It would take ten or twelve hours more to get him out.

"The Lord be praised! the Lord be praised!" said the preacher, but nobody paid any attention to him. They were thinking about how the pumps were working. Before the men had been rescued they were mighty eager to have the Lord on their side, but as soon as they got the men on top of the ground they seemed to forget about Him.

I am that way, too. When I am going along and everything is all right, I don't pay much attention

BOONE STOP

to the Lord, but if I have to go out some place at night and something happens, then I begin to think about the Lord.

"Second shift ready," called Shug Leffler. "Get in, boys. We've got to work fast. All hands ready. The water is rising and we've got to work like everything."

It didn't sound very much like Shug. It wasn't often that he could say anything without swearing, and especially when he said like something.

"What is it?" asked Pa, over the heads of the rest of them.

"They are all out but Ozy Getchell. He is in a pocket by himself."

Pa could not understand. He stood there with his lamp in his hat, ready to go down, looking tired and worn after the 119 hours of suspense.

"You say Ozy Getchell is still down there—in a pocket by himself—and the rest of them are out?"

"Yes," said Shug. "And we haven't much time to lose. Everybody in."

Pulling the bucket over to the platform, Shug swung in his leg.

"Stop!" said Pa, in a tone that made everybody turn. "Stop! At last it has come—at last. It is the judgment of God."

"What is? What do you mean?" asked Shug, awed by Pa's manner.

"That Ozy is alone. The rest have been saved. He shall die."

The gong on the ambulance sounded and the wheels crunched over the stones and tailings on the way to the rescue-car on the siding.

BOONE STOP

Word was spreading fast that the men had been rescued and people were running to join the crowd. There would be a babble of voices as the new ones reached the outer edge of the crowd, to stop suddenly, like coming to church late and finding the preacher praying.

"You mean that no one shall rescue Ozy?" asked Shug, rubbing a cake of dirt off his cheek. I knew how it felt, because when dirt dries on your face it begins to tickle and pull like a plaster.

"It is the judgment of God. He shall not live."

"Boys, the strain has been too much," said Shug working his foot over to get balanced in the bucket. "Come on, Ed. Get in, boys."

"You shall not go," said Pa, in the tone that he had used to the railroad men. Hazelnuts began to come and go. "Ozy Getchell has committed a great sin and he shall die and die alone."

"Every minute counts," said Shug. "The water may be getting him now."

With the strength and quickness that Pa sometimes had, he reached out and seizing Shug by the waist lifted him out of the bucket and flung him on the ground.

"No one shall go down there," said Pa without panting. "I tell you it is the will of God. I see it now." He threw out his hands as if he was going to ask a benediction. "I am the agent of the Lord and no one shall go."

"Get him, boys," called Shug, rising to his knees; his voice, hoarse and choked, sounded like an auctioneer's.

Three men made for Pa, while the crowd parted,

BOONE STOP

drawing back from the shaft while the bucket was swinging back and forth over its mouth. They came at each other, grunting and blowing through their noses, like trying to lift a hog to its gambrel. Stones and tailings began to fly down the shaft, rattling against the bucket, while the ladies screamed.

But I didn't scream. I gripped my hands and began to breathe fast and hoped Pa would win. But he didn't. Back and forth they struggled. One man lay still and another tried to get up, but sank back and rolled over on his stomach to keep his face from being stepped on.

"Get him!" called Shug. "Damn you, get him! He will kill me!"

A shovel was raised to strike Pa, but a hand pulled it down. I guess they thought it would hit somebody else.

The crowd closed in, with arms flying up and pants legs ripping. One man threw himself on the ground and seized Pa by the foot, with his arms locked around his legs. But Pa raised his foot and scraped him off as if he was mud.

"His hand, get it!" a voice gurgled as Pa's fingers were closing over a man's throat.

As the crowd parted little Irene Gap ran forward, gurgling and laughing. She was bowled over by a flying foot. Quickly was she seized and dragged out of the way, while others closed in on Pa. In a moment it was over. But they kept hold of him as if he would fly at them again.

Pa's breast was heaving and his shirt was torn away till the hair showed, but he didn't pay any attention to how he looked. Blood was running

BOONE STOP

down the side of his face, but he stood straight and tall and looked the crowd in the eye. The hazelnuts stood out on his face like bullets under an oilcloth.

But it was over. It was a good fight, but there were too many of them for Pa. He had licked the railroad men, but this time he had lost.

XVI

*I bring Pa some egg-nog and his knees seem lumpy.
But a few days after that he goes back to work
again. That night a man with a satchel comes.*

THE next morning Pa was sick and not able to go to work. It seemed strange to see Pa sick. I never thought of him as being one who ever got sick; he seemed more like a machine that never got out of fix. The rest of us might get sick and need the doctor, but we never expected anything like that to happen to Pa. We expected him to go just the same year after year.

Ma had been up with him all night, rubbing things on his chest and holding her hand on his forehead. Once in a while Gran'ma would go to the foot of the stairs and call up to ask how he was, but she didn't seem to care much. She hadn't been the same since Pa had turned Susie out.

"Breakfast is ready," said Gran'ma with a sigh. She was sighing more and more. She didn't sigh the way I did sometimes, when I would think how fickle girls were, but would close her eyes, draw her breath away down and sigh from the bottom of her lungs.

Our table was smaller; Susie was gone and now

BOONE STOP

Pa was not in his chair. Something was dragging us down one by one. It was living. It is hard work to live. You go along and nothing seems to change; one day is about like another. Then some one is missing and you have to stop to think what caused it. Things start off again and run along about the same for a while and then something happens to another member of the family. There's nothing much harder than living—unless it's trying to understand girls, especially when they get infatuated with somebody who isn't worthy of them.

I went up the creaking stairs with the runner of carpet in the middle, to see Pa, feeling dry in the mouth and my heart beating pretty fast. It was the first I had ever gone to see Pa when he was sick. Nobody ever expected him to get sick. He seemed to go on just the same, one day after another, except getting a little slower and not eating fried foods.

He was lying in bed, with a comfort folded over the foot and two pillows under his shoulders. His cheeks were sunken and his eyes watery, with a bandage around his jaw and over the top of his head, with the ends fastened together by a safety pin. Where the bandage pulled back his beard the flesh was white, but the rest of his face was brown. The mine could not take away the long years in the sun. His hands were on top of the spread, with his long, bony fingers laced together. But they didn't lace together very well because he couldn't spread them far enough apart—especially the small one which was more curled up than the others. The nails were thick and rounded with the glistening gray that comes from rubbing against things for a long

BOONE STOP

time. The bones in his wrist were large and knobby and the left thumb bent to one side at the middle joint where he had got it caught in the binder wheel. Pa stopped only to pour some water on it and to tie a rag around it and then went on working, but his thumb had always been crooked. It made him take hold of a plate funny and you would think he was going to drop it, but he never did.

Propped up on the pillows with the covers falling in two long ridges where his legs were, he lay. He didn't look much like the man who had conquered the railroad men and who had led us to the top of the hill in his white robe to await the coming of the end of the world. He now looked more as if he worked by the day, or had an express wagon. Then you felt the power in his voice and the glance in his eye, but now, lying on the pillows with his hands making vague motions toward the pains in his body, he didn't seem much like the same man. His voice was broken and sometimes he would have to stop to swallow before he could finish a word. The world was wearing him out. Always a fighter, he was now being worsted. It wasn't often that Pa got licked, but now he found something that was conquering him. It was old age. It was creeping on him and he couldn't get his hands on it—the hands that before had always got the best of every fight.

Never before had he gone to bed after a fight—it was always the other fellow who had gone to bed. But now he was in bed and not able to eat anything but some milk toast and drink a little grape-juice. We always kept the grape-juice for anybody who got

BOONE STOP

sick, but you couldn't just say you had a headache and groan a little and get a bottle. You had to have a doctor.

One by one things were slipping away from Pa. The Angel of the Lord had deserted him and Susie was gone and I was playing pool whenever I wanted to. He didn't have much any more but Mid and he might just as well not have anything as him.

Day after day he stayed in bed, with his hands folded on his stomach, staring up at the ceiling. Sometimes, if you would come quietly up the stairs, he would have tears in his eyes. Then he would cough and wipe his eyes with the handkerchief under his pillow.

Nothing of the fight at the mine did he mention, no more than if there had never been a fight. When Speed Mosby came to see him and told him that Ozy Getchell had been dug out fourteen hours later, much weaker than the rest, but that he was now all right, Pa bit his lips together but said nothing. He asked about Joe Gap and the rest of the boys, but no reference did he make to Ozy or to the fight.

In a few days Ozy was down-town leaning up against the sunny side of the Owl Drug-store making the most of it. He was too weak to go back to work; it had hurt his health. He would never be able to do anything again but brain-work. So after people had quit asking him about his experience in the mine, he shook hands with everybody and said he was going back to college to go on with his brain-work.

When I came up-stairs one day with some egg-nog Pa was sitting on the side of the bed with his legs

BOONE STOP

hanging down. His legs looked thin in his underclothes, but lumpy enough at the knees.

"Come in," he said. "Where is the wind?"

He always had to know where the wind was. He could take a look at the clouds, study the wind a moment and tell more about the weather than the report in the little tin frame down at the post-office. It didn't make any difference how sick Pa was, he always wanted to know about the wind. He had lived outdoors so much and had had to struggle with the elements so long that he always had his eye on them.

With me it was different. I wouldn't notice whether we had any wind or not. I never paid any attention to anything unless I thought a cyclone was coming. But most of them went around. We never had any real good ones, like the one at St. Louis where it blew a man forty rods and landed him in the top of a tree. But he didn't get to go with a side-show or anything.

The next day Pa was able to walk across the room, with his hand on the back of a chair. When I went up with some chicken broth he wasn't in his room. I heard a squeak, and Pa came hurrying out of Susie's room with his eyes glistening.

"I was just taking a little exercise," he said, dropping down in the rocking-chair and pulling the blanket over his shoulders.

Jim Pinneo brought him a cane that he had whittled out of snakewood and gave it to him. The cane had a good many curves and bends in it before it got to the bottom, and on the tip Jim had put a brass shot-gun shell and it made a pretty slick cane.

BOONE STOP

Pa began to walk about the house or sit with the Bible on his knees, with his long, bony finger following the lines. But he was not meant to sit around the house. Always used to working from morning till night and doing something every minute, he could not content himself with the house.

One morning he appeared at breakfast. Putting one hand on the back of the chair and the other on the table he let himself down easy. He talked a good deal and tried to joke a little, but he didn't have very much spirit. Sorrows and troubles were coming too thick and fast. The jokes were not free and easy, like when I had come back from the Commercial House. After breakfast he would get up and, going into the parlor, would open the Bible and start to read, but pretty soon he would be wandering from room to room, his snakewood cane going *clap-clap*, stopping to straighten out a picture on the wall, or to turn up a page of the First National Bank calendar to see when there was a new moon. He would look through the stereoscopes again and read on the back how many millions of gallons of water went over Niagara a minute and, getting out the lumber-yard pencil, would figure up how many barrels a day that was, and then he would get the pen and ink and start a letter to Uncle Allen back in Ohio and write two or three pages to find that one of the legs of the center-table was wobbly. Getting the screw-driver from the catch-all box in the pantry, he would take the books off and turning the table over would tighten the leg and lay away the letter to be answered some other time. Ma would find it a few days later and ask him if he was going to answer it, and he

BOONE STOP

would say, yes, some day, and forget all about it. Ma would put a new date-line on it, write a paragraph at the bottom, and give it to me to mail. Then Pa would go up to Susie's room and we would hear his shoes squeak and when he came down he would be more restless than ever. Going out to the kitchen where Ma was cooking down something, he would sit with his head in his hands for a while, looking straight ahead, then get up and send Mid to the woodshed for a boot. He would cut the top into long strips and start in to make a new seat for Ma's chair, but before he would get it done the zinc paper would come and Ma would put a cushion on the chair and say nothing more about it. He would read awhile, his head would begin to droop and he would begin to breathe through his mouth and the paper would slide to his knees, balance a moment and slip to the floor. Picking it up, he would glance around to see if anybody was watching and start to read once more. It would slip to the floor again; picking it up he would put it on the center-table and hobble out to look at the thermometer. Coming back, he would limp into his bedroom and, opening the tin box, would look through his will and deed papers till Ma called him for dinner. He would lean his cane against the table and start to sit down, with his hand on the back of the chair, then let loose and drop the rest of the way and say, "Uhum!" It wasn't much like Pa, who used to milk with a lantern and work all day in the fields and, coming back in the evening, would preach till people called out, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!"

BOONE STOP

"I've had enough of this," said Pa, one evening. "I'm not going to sit around any more. My father was ninety-five when he died. I'm going back to work."

It was the first time he had ever mentioned anything about dying. Always he had talked about living and serving the Lord.

"No, Isom, you have no need to go back to work," said Ma, more like Gran'ma would have said it. "We have enough to educate the children and you've done your share of work in this world." It was the first time Ma had gone against Pa's wishes. Pa had always said what should be done and Ma had always said yes.

"One's work is never done—until the Lord calls him to his reward. 'Six days shalt thou labor'—and I'm not laboring even one. In the morning I go back to work."

"No, Isom," said Ma, laying her hand on his big brown, knotted one, with the swollen joints and the fingers turning in. "Your work is done." It wasn't often that Ma touched Pa that way. She always listened to what he said and sat beside him in church and got down on her knees when he did, but she never took his hand or smoothed his hair.

"Never shall I be a drone."

After I had gone up-stairs to bed I could still hear them arguing, Pa's voice getting higher and higher and Ma saying no.

But Pa won. Next morning when I came down Pa was at the breakfast-table, while Ma sat with her eyes on her plate. At the gate Pa waited for me, with his bucket in one hand and his snakewood

BOONE STOP

cane in the other and off we walked. He could not walk very fast and had to be careful where the sidewalk changed.

The Bible pictures were down, with nothing left except ragged pieces under the tack-heads.

Pa stood staring at the picture of the woman without many clothes on, his hand trembling on his cane.

"Who has desecrated the works of the Lord?" demanded Pa, his head going up and his shoulders straightening. But he was not as straight and the hazelnuts were not as hard as when he had faced the men at the Never Fail.

"What you askin'?" said Shug Leffler, swallowing at something in his own throat, turning from his locker with his shirt still unbuttoned.

"My question was, who has desecrated the works of the Lord?" repeated Pa, his fingers working on the handle of his cane.

"If you mean them Tares pictures, why I tore them down. Now that you know, what you goin' to do about it?"

Shug stuck out his neck like a rooster, till his face was almost in Pa's beard.

Pa's hand grew tighter and he tried to straighten up till he was taller than Shug, but the rheumatism had got too strong a hold on his shoulders. He let loose of his cane; it clattered to the cement floor. Even though he was getting old he would fight with only his bare hands. He had settled the tramp, he had defied the railroad men, and he had faced the miners at the Never Fail with only his bare hands. They were the weapons of the Lord. Where victory

BOONE STOP

belonged the Lord would give it to him who used only his weapons.

"I'm ground boss here now," said Shug, "and what I say around these works goes."

The men began to gather around, their shirts open and their thumbs greasy from pushing sunshine into their lamps.

Slowly Pa's eyes began to go down, the way they had to me on the street corner, and then he began to bend forward. Spreading out his legs and bracing his hand on a locker door he picked up his cane while Shug drew back, his fists clenched. But Pa was not going to use it on him. Pa was not that kind.

"They will go back," said Pa and moved away.

To Speed Mosby's office he went. The next morning the pictures were back. It was the first time Pa had ever gone to anybody for help.

Pa would come and go without speaking to many people. He used to speak to everybody he met on the street, and ask them how they were getting along and if they had liked the sermon last Sunday, but now he would limp along with his eyes down to see that his cane didn't go between the cracks, not noticing any one.

Getting into the bucket was harder and harder. He did not want the rest of them to see how he had to take hold of his leg to get it over the side, so he would wait in the change-house till the men were down, when he would signal for the bucket. He would eat his lunch alone, sometimes not taking anything but a hard-boiled egg and his coffee. To see him mincing over an egg, or nibbling at a cracker,

BOONE STOP

you would never think that at a haying he was the biggest eater of any of them.

One evening on the way home it began to rain. He tried to hurry along faster, but in a block he had to stop and feel of his heart. I got pretty wet waiting for him.

Ma was standing at the window with her nose pressed against the glass, looking anxious. She made him go into the kitchen, roll up his pants and take a hot mustard foot-bath in the candy-bucket, but it wasn't any use. The next morning he could not get out of bed.

"Your dad's getting kind of bunged up," said Pa, and kind of laughed and kept his eyes down. "But he's not out of the race yet by a long shot." It didn't sound much like Pa talking in such undignified language. It was the way he talked sometimes when he wanted to be funny. He wanted us to think that it wasn't anything and not to pay any attention to him.

That night I heard voices and somebody coming up-stairs fumbling his way along and stumbling where the steps turned. It was the first time the doctor had ever come to see Pa. Ma had not consulted Pa; she had just sent for him. It seemed strange for Ma to do anything without consulting Pa.

"What you doing around here?" asked Pa and laughed a little. "You needn't think you are going to keep me in bed."

But the doctor did and Ma took his pants and shirt and hung them away in the closet as if it was going to be a long time before Pa could use them again.

BOONE STOP

But it wasn't. Pa would not give in that easily. Putting his hand on Ma's shoulder he came downstairs. While he was sitting on the porch, wrapped up in Gran'ma's shawl, Ma moved his bed down to the first floor.

"You needn't think you are going to keep me here," said Pa. "A lot of punkins are going to be frosted before I kick the bucket."

He wanted to make out that it wasn't anything. He would laugh and joke as if it wasn't anything, but when he was alone he would lie still with his fingers laced, staring up in the direction of Susie's room. When we would come in unexpectedly he would blow his nose and wipe his eyes.

Coming in to meals was harder and harder work and one day when Speed Mosby came to call on him he brought him a pair of crutches.

"You must think I am an old man," said Pa in his joking voice. "Why, Mr. Mosby, I am just a boy. If I put some cream on my lip the cat could still shave me."

Mr. Mosby laughed, but when he went out he shook hands a long time with Ma.

The crutches stood at the head of the bed day after day, but Pa would hardly touch them. Sometimes he would hang his handkerchief on the handle of one of them, but when he got up to come in to a meal he would use his cane.

"Take them away," he said to Ma. "They haunt me, standing there all the time and my eyes always coming back to them. The Seeds never use crutches. My father never had his hands on a pair in his life."

Ma took them away, but not very far. She just

BOONE STOP

stood them behind the pantry door. Once in a while one of them would fall down and then she would listen to see if he recognized the sound.

One day, coming to the table, his cane slipped on the zinc protector under the stove and he fell.

"This is what is going to happen to your cane," said the doctor, and snapped it across his knee.

Pa's lip trembled and he swallowed hard the way he always did before he asserted himself. But he didn't. He turned his head on the pillow and pretty soon the hazelnuts were gone. It was the first time I had ever seen them disappear without the other person knowing it.

"Everybody come in," said Pa, one morning when he was feeling better, "and watch the old man perform." He laughed as if he had been thinking up for a long time what he was going to say. "What is it," he asked in his joking way, "that walks on two legs in the morning, three at noon and four in the afternoon?"

Gran'ma tried to smile and turned to me because I was younger and wasn't supposed to know.

I studied a moment and wrinkled up my brow as if I was trying to think hard.

"A centipede."

It wasn't a very good answer, but it was better than none. I mustn't let Pa know.

"What do you think of that, Mother? He's calling me a centipede! Well, I'll show you what it is." With that he braced himself on the crutches and went limping across the floor.

"That's pretty bad, isn't it, Mother? My own flesh and blood calling me a centipede."

BOONE STOP

He would watch till just as a meal was ready, when, getting up on his crutches, he would swing himself across the floor to the table. Leaning his crutches against the table, he would lower himself into his chair and say, "Uhum." After he was seated Ma would come in and stand the crutches against the wall and then say dinner was ready. I knew why he came in first and left last, but I did not let on. None of us did.

Always careful of the neatness of his brown suit, he now began to dribble food down the front, never paying any attention to it, sitting with his head down and his eyes on his plate till somebody spoke to him and then he would think hard of something funny to say. But nobody mentioned the dribble on his clothes. After the meal was over he would hobble back to his chair and lay the crutches on the floor beside him. Then Ma would come in with a wet cloth, when nobody was around, and wipe the things off. He wouldn't thank her or anything, trying to pretend that he wasn't noticing.

More and more he began to sleep in his chair, his mouth open and breathing deeper and deeper till he would choke. Waking up he would turn guiltily around to see if anybody was looking and then pick up his paper again. If any one was looking he would laugh and say it did beat all how no-account some folks were and he was glad he wasn't one of them.

He would be the first one up of a morning, sitting in his rocking-chair so that he could look into the kitchen and watch Ma build the fire. When she was finished he would lean back in his chair and be asleep before breakfast was ready.

BOONE STOP

More and more cushions he put in the seat of his big chair and behind his back, so that he would no longer be sitting up straight and erect the way he used to when the preacher was talking, but almost lying down, ready to go to sleep any minute.

After a rainy, gloomy day he said one evening in his joking way, "Mother, if you don't mind I believe I'll put on a little style this evening. I have been reading how these rich people have their meals brought to them. I wish you would bring mine in to-night."

Ma brought it in on the World's Fair tray and Pa held it on his knees and bowed his head till Ma got through saying grace. The next day he was in to the table, but a few days after that he asked her to bring the tray in again; this time he did not say anything about being stylish.

At first, renouncing the world and waiting on Pa was all right and an easy way of getting out of work, but pretty soon it got so it wasn't any fun. I couldn't help thinking about Red Milligan's and the hayrack-ride the Copus Club was going to have. Should I go or not? That was the question. Should I stay at home and sacrifice myself, or go out among the young people and have a good time? I knew, all right, which I was going to do, but I liked to think which would be better.

Every time I went down-town after medicine for Pa I would pass Red Milligan's. You certainly could have an awfully good time in there. The next time I wouldn't renounce anything that gave me so much fun. I would just renounce Mid.

"Hello, old sport!" said Red, when I stopped to

BOONE STOP

look through the window to see who was having a good time. "Come on in and have a smoke. What 'll you have?" he asked, sliding back the panel.

I didn't ask for a two-for-a-quarter cigar, the way Merle would have. "I'll take that," I said, pointing to a five-cent cigar. "Something mild."

Merle wasn't as much as I thought he was. I was finding that out—especially since he had begun to show off before Cleo. Silk shirts and chewing-gum don't make a gentleman. Beauty is as beauty does, and nobody who made any pretense of being a gentleman would try to cut out a friend just because the friend had had a misunderstanding with his lady.

"We have been having some mighty slick games here," said Red. "You ought to seen a jump shot Jim Pinneo made the other night. Supposin' we polish off a couple." And he played me two games without charging me a cent. "All you need is a little regular practice," said Red. "You got the makings of a real player in you. Just a little practice every day—that's all."

Coming over, he sat down in a chair beside me in front of everybody. When Red was a friend he was a real friend.

"How you gettin' along with the girls?" asked Red, lowering his voice. Red always lowered his voice and hunched up closer when he talked about the girls. "You do the way I say and you'll know how to handle 'em. Don't pull any rough stuff. That don't go—not with refined ladies. But once you start in to do a thing, don't stop till you get there. That's the secret of handling 'em."

I could get some mighty good points from Red

BOONE STOP

before the hayrack-ride. I would ask him. "How long should you know a girl—I mean a refined one—before you try to—to kiss her?" I must not let him know I meant Cleo.

"That all depends on the girl. Some of them the first night. You ain't much of a man if you 'ain't got a girl sized up by ten o'clock."

"I don't mean a waitress. I mean a girl you like. You know—sweet and gentle and plays a piano."

"Oh, I see! Naturally it takes longer with that kind. You can see that."

I could. That was logical. Red certainly understood the sex.

"Are you in love with the girl?" asked Red, screwing up his eye.

"I mean that—that type of girl. I just meant in general."

"How well do you know the girl? Have you ever held her hand?"

Red could ask embarrassing questions.

"I don't mean any specific girl. I mean just the general run of girls that you might meet on a hayrack-ride."

"That's pretty hard to say—unless I knew which girl. If I knew her name I could tell you mighty soon."

"I don't mean any special girl—just the sex in general."

"Well, that depends on where you are. Is this to be in her parlor or on a hayrack-ride?"

"It might be anywhere. How would you do if it was outdoors and a crowd was around?"

"The sooner you do it the better. Always re-

BOONE STOP

member that. It's like having a tooth pulled. The longer you put it off the harder it is. It makes them respect you."

"But supposing you made a mistake and she didn't want to be kissed."

"Of course you got to run some risk. All you got to do when you're talking is to lean over suddenly and kiss 'em. That's all. You may feel a little excited, but don't pay any attention to that. Just be talking along natural and then just grab 'em and kiss 'em. That's all."

It did seem easy the way Red told it. You didn't have to lead up to it or anything. Just grab them and kiss them; that was all.

"But won't they do anything?"

"Not much. They'll just say you ought to be ashamed and look at you reproachfully."

"Then what do you do?"

"You can say that you was a brute and that you are ashamed of yourself, but that something bigger than you made you do it, because you loved them so. Then they'll look at you and say: 'I didn't understand. That's different.' That's all there is to it."

On the hayrack-ride I would lead the conversation around so that Cleo would have to ask me what I was doing, but I wouldn't tell her till she dragged it out of me that I was sacrificing myself for Pa. Then she would see what a good husband I would make. Merle Sewell would look pretty cheap and shoddy alongside of me. She would make short work of him. A husband ought to be something besides a good pool-player. He should be deep and serious. I might laugh and be gay and say funny things at a

BOONE STOP

dance, but, after all, there was a great, deep vein of seriousness in me—the kind of seriousness that would make a pure, noble husband. It wouldn't take her long to see that. I would stay at home evenings and wait on her and tell her how beautiful she was. All I expected of her was just to be sweet and gentle and be my inspiration. We would send the washing out.

If she accepted me she would never have to do any hard work. She would not have to soil her hands. Every evening she would put on her visiting-dress and gold breastpin and come to the gate to meet me and we would walk up the path to our home, hand in hand, as happy as two care-free birds. I would buy her a rubber-tired buggy and hire Charley Colden to beat the carpets. I didn't have money yet, but it wouldn't take me long to get it after I got started, as smart as I was. We would grow old together and she would wear a lace cap the way Gran'ma did on Sundays and I would wear a heavy gold watch-chain and Congress shoes. But Cleo would have to get rid of Merle Sewell first. I would give her to understand that. I wasn't going to grow old with her if she let him hang around all the time.

What if he should try to kiss her? That would be awful. What if he should get out a package of chewing-gum and say something about kiss me and then do it before she could scream? Would I marry her then? Her kiss would no longer be pure. Her lips would be defiled. I might marry her in time, after the wound had healed, but always before me would be the picture of her clasped in another's arms.

BOONE STOP

Even when I held her to my throbbing breast I could still feel Merle's coarse lips on hers. But I would never tell her; I would suffer in silence. Sometimes she would come up to where I was sitting alone to find tears in my eyes and would say, "Father, what do those tears mean?"

Taking her withered hand in mine, I would smile through them and say: "Nothing, Mother. It was just the wind. You must remember we are getting old now." Then I would kiss her lightly and turn the conversation.

Going home, I washed in the kitchen sink, picked the hairs out of the comb, slicked myself up, and went to the dining-room to see if supper was ready. I saw that something had been changed. The table had been made smaller.

"I've been ironing," Ma said, kind of apologizing, "and I took a leaf out. The table takes up so much room."

There were plates for just four. Ma sat down in her chair at the right of Pa's seat and Mid took his place opposite her, with Gran'ma at the end of the table. There was only one place left. It was Pa's.

I stood looking at Ma, wondering where she expected me to go. She seemed to have forgotten me. I hesitated, while Ma pretended not to be noticing.

"You see, I just made it smaller," said Ma, hurriedly. "It takes up so much room. Sit down, Cleveland."

I would have to take Pa's chair. I felt a queer tingling—never before had anybody sat in Pa's seat. It was for him, and the person who sat there was the head of the family.

BOONE STOP

"I've got something you like, Cleveland—fried mush."

"I certainly do," I said, as if I wasn't noticing anything in particular. "Just fill me up with mush and I'm happy." I laughed as if it was pretty funny, and Ma laughed, too. "I'll bet the President of the United States wishes he could open his collar and sit down in front of a bucket of mush like this."

"That shows you don't know anything about the President of the United States," said Mid, in his big way. He didn't know what the change meant. He did not see what was going on. To listen to him you would think that he boarded with the President. "The President has a lot better things to eat than fried mush. He has pie and cake and ice-cream and sardines and lady-fingers. Plain, ordinary fried mush don't mean anything to him. He has all he wants between meals, too."

I didn't say anything. There wasn't any use in talking to Mid. He couldn't see what was happening.

Pulling back my chair I was just sitting down when Pa appeared in the door.

"I thought I would just surprise you. You needn't think I am going to eat out there all by myself, like a horse with the heaves."

He came swinging around to sit down, but there wasn't any place for him.

"Why, Pa, I didn't expect you!" said Ma. "I was ironing and took a leaf out. It makes the room so crowded. I thought it wouldn't make any difference—just for to-night. It won't take a minute to change it."

BOONE STOP

He stood hanging on his crutches, his big, knotted fingers gripped over the handles.

Ma started to get up quickly—the way she always did when she was going to do anything for Pa.

“Don’t bother, Mother. It’s all right. That’s what a fellow gets for not being to meals on time. I’ll just draw up my own chair to where I can see you. It’s getting to be a job to sit in these straight-backs, anyway. I can eat just as much in my rocker as anywhere. What I want is quantity. If you want me to work you must feed me well.” With that Pa laughed in his joking way and dropped down in his rocking-chair and said, “Uhum.”

He had talked as if he was going to eat a lot, but he didn’t. He just nibbled along and once in a while he would cough and have to wipe his eyes. But it didn’t make much difference to me. I could eat just as much in one place as another.

XVII

*We go out on a hayrack-ride. I try to kiss a girl and
that night a doctor comes to our house.*

I DRESSED up fine for the hayrack-ride. I pressed my pants, and got two cuff-buttons that were mates, and shaved.

I couldn't bear to let anybody see me shave. That was too sacred. I could not stand up in front of a mirror in the kitchen and let anybody who came along stop and gawk at me. Getting Pa's mustache-cup and some soap and hot water from the kitchen, I went to the spare bedroom and sharpened my razor on Pa's hone. He had had it when he was a boy but he had not been very careful of it or had used it to drive things with. The soap was not very thick and would run down my collar, because kitchen soap is not as good for shaving as drug-store soap.

Pa would watch me going by and humming to myself and pretending not to be doing anything special, and would kind of smile to himself. He seemed to be thinking about the time he was a boy. Being a young man is hard work because you are always reminding somebody of when they were young. When I would be stretching out a hair on

BOONE STOP

my chin and letting it go back again, Pa would smile and begin to talk about the time he was a boy in Ohio and when Mr. Chambers saw me he would begin to snap his fingers and laugh.

"You have just about enough for a barn-raising," Pa said, and laughed.

But I didn't care. I had more than Mid.

I looked at myself. No wonder girls were taken by me. I was pretty good-looking and especially when I put my finger up to my temple and lowered my eyes.

I looked at my lips in the mirror and pushed them out and twisted them to one side, because this very night they were to kiss a girl. Four hours more and they would be crushed against hers. The mirror was good for practising how I would reach out and take her in my arms and draw her face up to mine. But it wasn't much good for kissing because my nose got in the way. Three hours and a half more and I would press my lips tenderly—oh, so tenderly—against hers. Life was wonderful.

I would ask Mr. Chambers if I could have her and we would go to Kansas City and when we came back we would get one of those instantaneous ice-cream freezers and set up housekeeping.

When I got to the Copus Club a good many of them were already there.

"Hello, everybody!" I said, and pretty soon I had a crowd around me nearly hurting themselves laughing. I could think of as many funny things to say as I had at the dance. My brain worked like lightning; I wouldn't get one thing out of my mouth till I would think of something else. We were all

BOONE STOP

dressed up like farmers. I had on a pair of boots and a straw hat and a stalk of timothy in my mouth.

Screeching up my voice I said: "Hello, Si! Got any hog cholera down in your neighborhood?"

The rest of them nearly hurt themselves laughing. No difference how much anybody else acted like a farmer I would go them one better. Cleo would see that I was a mighty entertaining man. We would never be lonesome after we were married.

"All aboard!" somebody called, and we started down-stairs to where the wagons were waiting. Putting a broom under my arm, I pretended it was a crutch and went limping along. But Merle Sewell couldn't do anything funny; all he could do was to stand around and once in a while say, "By heck." It wouldn't take a girl long to choose between us.

I helped Cleo up and Merle Sewell came scrabbling up behind her. There was plenty of room on the other wagon, but he had to come on ours. That was the way with him; he always had to push in where he was not wanted.

"I've forgotten my lunch-box," said Bess Crane. "Who will run back and get it?"

"By heck! I will!" I said. "Take keer of yourself while I'm gone."

All the way back I kept thinking of something funny to say to her, but when I got down to the sidewalk again the wagon was gone. I would have to go on the one Charley Colden was driving. Merle Sewell had done that. I climbed up and tried to say "By heck!" and funny things that way but I didn't feel much in the spirit. All I could think

BOONE STOP

about was if Merle was sitting by her side and trying to show off.

When we got there it was sickening to see him trying to be funny. Tying a handkerchief around his neck, he rolled up his trouser leg and tried to talk through his nose like a farmer. Then he put a stick under his arm and limped along and said, "Give the poor dime a cripple." Some of the girls laughed, but it wasn't funny. You would think they could see through such things, but they can't.

Girls are hard to understand. Cleo never seemed to think about the sweet and beautiful things of life; she never seemed to think about growing old with me, nor how we would sit around the fireside of life and smile tenderly at each other. Merle wouldn't be anybody to grow old with: he would always be acting a fool.

So I had to get along with Bess Crane.

The four of us went out in a boat and when we got out in it Merle said he didn't know how to row, so I had to pull him and Cleo and Bess around.

"I want to do my part," said Merle, and began to sing. Once in a while he would pinch his throat up and say that he was a country choir, and then Cleo and Bess would laugh. But I didn't; I just looked at him and curled up my lip and said, "Give the calf more rope," but he didn't pay any attention. He had no finer feelings.

While we were sitting on the ground having supper, I felt something crawling and began slapping myself and Merle laughed till he upset the jelly, but it wasn't funny. Anybody is apt to get ants on them.

BOONE STOP

"All aboard and those who can't get a board get a rail," said Merle when we were getting ready to go home and everybody laughed as if he had said something funny.

Watching my chance I sat down beside Cleo so that Merle had to take Bess. Now I had Cleo to myself. The time had come.

Now was my chance. I would do it on the way home, when no one was looking, but I let mile after mile go by. My throat got dry and a good deal of the time I didn't know what I was saying. "Now's your chance, now's your chance," I kept telling myself. "If you don't do it now you never will. Just kiss her, like Red Milligan said—that's all there is to it."

But I couldn't do it. "I will do it when I get to the Knabb school-house," I said and tried to keep on talking, but I couldn't do much but say yes and no and what a nice evening it was. Closer and closer we got to the school-house . . . and then we got even with it and passed on by.

"You've got to do it when you get to Hall's Corners," I said to myself. "You've simply got to."

The nearer we got the drier my mouth got and the faster my heart beat. As we were making the turn I suddenly threw out my arms and pulled her over and kissed her.

With that she gave me a lick in the face. I didn't know they could hit so hard.

"What do you mean?" she said.

Red hadn't said anything about them turning around and giving you a belt in the face. It was a

BOONE STOP

good lick. If she had been a boy she would have been a wonder as a fighter.

"Nothing," I whispered so that nobody would notice. But Cleo didn't seem to care whether anybody heard or not.

"Nothing," I said again, like a man in front of a side-show, "just a little innocent fun and amusement." Reaching out I grabbed her again, because I wasn't going to let her get the best of me. That was what Red said. With that she stood up and gave me another one. She could hit better standing up.

"You get off here and get off this minute," she said.

"I—I didn't mean anything," I whispered.

"Get off this minute," she said, louder than ever.

"Charley, stop the horses."

Charley pulled up the team and I slid down.

"All right, Charley," she said. "Go ahead."

Mile after mile I had to walk. As Jim Pinneo's wagon went rattling by me they leaned over, threw hay on me and said things and laughed. I had made a fool of myself. I was ruined as far as girls went. Girls were not the way Red Milligan said. He didn't know anything about girls like Cleo.

When I got home there was a light in the house and the doctor's team was tied outside. But I didn't think anything about it. I was thinking of what had happened on the hay-wagon and how I could never outlive it. I would never be able to win Cleo now. She would grow up and marry Merle and have a house full of kids. One false step and I had ruined my life.

BOONE STOP

The doctor was sitting by the side of the bed, with his black bag open on a chair. But he didn't have any medical instruments with him. They are always more interesting than bottles all the same size.

Pa had a thermometer in his mouth and was folding and unfolding his handkerchief with his long, bony fingers.

"Your father has been waiting all evening to see you," whispered Gran'ma. "He has been asking for you and sometimes he thought you wouldn't come soon enough. He wants to talk to you."

After the doctor had gone I went in wondering what Pa wanted to say to me. I hadn't done anything—anyway, not lately. Except to-night and he couldn't know about that. He had more pillows behind him and his wrists were getting pretty small because there wasn't much meat on them any more. Rheumatism had set in in one of his eyes so that he couldn't see very well and he had to wipe it pretty often and look hard to tell which one you were.

He was probably going to ask me never to go to Red Milligan's again. I didn't care if he did. I would promise him, and I wouldn't go there again either. Red didn't know as much about girls as he thought he did, anyway.

I must say something appropriate. "Are you worse, Pa?" I asked.

"I'm getting so I'm not much good any more," he said, shutting his bad eye and opening it again so that he could see better. "The old clock is running down. Did you have a good time this evening?"

"Yes," I said, but I hadn't. Nobody could have a good time with Merle Sewell around.

BOONE STOP

"I want you to have a good time but I don't want you to do anything you shouldn't. I have tried to do the best by you I could, but no doubt I have made mistakes. I always want you to remember that. I have had a pretty hard time all my life. I guess maybe you never realized that. My father was strict with me and then I came out to Missouri in a covered wagon with an extra horse behind and entered up our land and it was pretty hard work to make a living. A good many nights with the snow whirling around our sod house we thought you were not going to live, but there wasn't any doctor to send for so I would hold you in my arms and the next day go out and shuck corn and my fingers would freeze and crack open, but I had to keep on working. I never told you the hard time your mother and I were going through for our children." Pa said children, but I knew he meant me because I was the oldest. "Sometimes we didn't think we could hold the place any longer, and then your mother would bring you out in a half-barrel with a carpet over the sawed boards and put you in the front end of the wagon and help me pick corn. She was never very strong after that. It went hard with her when Mid and Susie were born." When he said Susie he stopped and blew his nose as if he had a cold in his head. But he hadn't. "I worked hard so as to have a little something to leave my children. It was hard to give up the farm at Rutherford—when I had worked so long for it—and then come here without anything. It was hard . . . especially when you get to be my age . . . but it was the will of the Lord."

BOONE STOP

Pa stopped. As long as it was the will of the Lord it was all right. He didn't mind what he had to go through so long as it was the will of the Lord. It seemed strange that the Lord never willed anything nice for a person.

"Susie was the last child . . . to live. Your mother was getting pretty weak then. Susie was a sweet child and everybody always said how good she was." Pa kept talking as if she was dead, but it didn't keep him from having to stop once in a while to swallow. "She was never strong; when I would have to sit up with her at night I would read and study. An education comes slowly that way, so we took the teacher in to board and that made it a little easier. A good many of the neighbors thought I was queer to sit up at night and figure. Then one night Susie got sick. The horses were too tired to take out so I started on foot for town, where there was a doctor." That was the way with Pa; if the horses were tired he would walk to save them. "It was pretty cold and after a while I saw a light. There were not many houses because the people were just coming in. And if you got off the road it was hard to find it again. I was so sleepy I thought I would back up against a corner post and rest a moment before going on to the light. The next thing I knew I was lying on a horse-blanket in the house of one of the neighbors. That was what started the rheumatism. . . . She learned rapidly at school." He didn't seem to notice that he was changing to Susie without mentioning her name. "She used to come home in the evenings for me to help her solve her arithmetic problems. I would sharpen my pen-

BOONE STOP

cil and get some wrapping-paper and help her work them out. I liked to do it. But it wasn't long till she was ahead of me." As Pa said it he looked proud. He wouldn't have said it about me, but he did about Susie. It wasn't often Pa bragged on his children. "We named her after your mother, but some of them said she looked more like me than she did like your mother." Pa waited for me to say, "Yes, she did," but I didn't say it because I hadn't ever thought of it. "Your Uncle Allen used to say that. He was always good at noticing things."

Pa stopped and closed his eyes and I thought he was through, but he wasn't. Then he opened his eyes as if he had been asleep and said, "Cleveland, I wish you would go to my trousers and bring me my pocketbook."

I found them in the closet in the spare room where Ma had put them, hanging up by the buckle in the back, and felt in the left-hand pocket, because that was where he always kept his money. He always had a certain pocket for everything and never got things mixed up the way I did. I would start in to have one pocket for my money and one for my knife and another for my knucks and the first thing I would know they would all be in one pocket. But Pa never did. He never got anything mixed up. I took out the pocketbook and held it in my hand, but I didn't open it or anything. I could have just as easily as not, but I didn't.

Pa took it in his hands and untwisted the knobs with his thumb that was bent around to one side where it had been caught in the binder wheel and opened the pocketbook. He did not open the side

BOONE STOP

where the money was like I was expecting, but the other side where he kept his keys. Reaching in, he took out his watch-key and then a long, straight one with a square end. "Will you hand me my watch?" he said, lifting up his eyes to where it was on the medicine-shelf. Pa never said please, or anything that way, but he never just told you to do a thing. He would always ask you and leave it to you whether you would or not. That was his way of getting around being polite.

The glass on Pa's watch was pretty thick so that when he was lifting things with the weight on his hips it wouldn't break the crystal. On it was a strap with a slit in it so that he could fasten it around his suspender. "I just wanted to show you how to wind it," said Pa. "You mustn't twist it too tight. I did one time and broke the spring and it cost me a dollar and a half to get it fixed. Give it two twists after it begins to tighten and that is enough. Would you like to have it, Cleveland?"

It wasn't a fashionable watch. Pa would not have anything just because it was fashionable. He wanted it because it wouldn't break and because it would last a long time. Pa thought a good deal of his watch. At a sale or anything when somebody would ask what time it was and all the men would pull out their watches and say what time they had, Pa would take out his and say it was half past eleven or whatever time it was as if that settled it.

Pa held it out to me by the strap. It was a big watch. It was too heavy and the crystal was too thick. Merle Sewell wouldn't carry one like it. Merle had a stem-wind and when he was talking to

BOONE STOP

you he would take it out and wind it up. Red Milligan had a stem-wind, too, with some good pictures in the back. When things were getting kind of dull at night he would open it up and show them to you. Red wouldn't have anything except the best.

"It's a good timekeeper," said Pa, kind of anxiously. "We had a good crop year or I wouldn't have been able to afford a watch like that. It may seem a little heavy at first, but after you get used to it you won't notice it. Would you like to try it on?"

I could see what Pa was leading up to. He was going to make me a present of it. The watch was all right for Pa, but it wouldn't be much of a watch to show down at Red Milligan's.

"I didn't have a watch till I was twenty-eight," said Pa. "Then I had to buy it. I didn't have anybody give it to me. It was pretty hard saving up the money. And it wasn't as good a watch as this one, either. You can always depend on this watch. If you get a poor watch the repair bill is pretty high. Just put it in your pocket and see how you like it."

I did and it made my pocket sag down a good ways.

"It won't seem so heavy in a day or two. I remember it seemed kind of heavy to me too at first. I don't know of a better timekeeper anywhere around. You may carry it awhile if you want to, Cleveland. I can see the clock from here so I won't need it for a while."

Pa stopped and studied my face for a long time as if he didn't want to forget how I looked, then he said,

BOONE STOP

"Did you ever see this other key, Cleveland?" With that he held up the long straight key with the square end.

I had lots of times, when I would peep through the door while he was in the spare room looking through his deed-box, but I didn't let on. "I think I have," I said. "It's for your box, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said. "I wish you would bring it to me. . . . I always carry the key myself," he said when I had brought it to him. "Maybe you had better take it for a while. I'll show you how it works." With that Pa turned the key in the lock. There wasn't anything to show about how it worked because all there was to do was just to stick it in and turn it. "These are some of my papers—the deed to the house and some things that way. I thought maybe you would like to know." With that he opened the box and there was Susie's picture on top. It had been taken a good while ago, with the name of the photographer stamped in gold on the bottom, with gold all around the edges. She was sitting on a bench beside a gate that didn't have any lock on, and down her shoulders were curls. It had been a long time since Susie had had curls. When Pa saw it he took it up and then turned it face down and started to look through the rest of the papers, but pretty soon he took it up again and kind of brushed his hand over it as if it wasn't clear enough. "The photographer said she was the smartest girl he ever had in his studio," said Pa, kind of rough as if he was ashamed to praise her. "He made her read a book out loud and he said it was the best reading that he ever heard. Every time he would see me on

BOONE STOP

the street he would ask how she was. That was what people used to think about Susie."

Pa started turning through the papers, but he kept Susie's picture in his hand. "This is the lightning insurance," he said, holding up some long folded papers with rivets through them, "and these are your mother's wedding gloves." One of the fingers was gone because a mouse or something had eaten it up and the other was pretty yellow and twisted the way it had been lying in the box. But Pa didn't pay any attention. "He was a good photographer, too," said Pa, as if he hadn't stopped talking about the photographer. "He always said he wanted a little girl, but they never had any children. He always prophesied that she would be a smart woman—and grow up to be a comfort to us in our old age." Pa didn't talk any more for a while, just lying there with the photograph in his hand and turning it over to read on the back where he had written in lead-pencil how old she was when the picture was taken. "Does she know how sick I am?" he asked. "Has any one written to her?"

"I don't know," I said, "but I will ask Gran'ma." I started to get up.

"No, no," said Pa, reaching out a hand as if to keep me back. But he couldn't have done it because he didn't have much strength. "I just thought maybe you knew."

"No, I don't," I said.

"I just happened to think of it," said Pa, and then I said I didn't again, and we kept saying that back and forth because we couldn't think of anything else to say. Pa started in to talk about the

BOONE STOP

deeds, but pretty soon he was back to Susie again. "She was always good about sickness. She couldn't bear to see anybody sick. She used to have all the chickens with splints around their legs. Sometimes it looked comical to see them all tied up with rags and sticks." With that Pa laughed a little, but he didn't get to laugh very much, because it made him cough. "When I would get my finger hurt with the hay-loader or anything she would wipe it off and tie it up with a rag. She always said that when I got sick she would wait on me. I guess this is the only time I have been sick since she was big enough."

"Do you want me to tell Gran'ma so that she can write to her?"

"No," he said, and drew his lips down tight. "No," he said, still louder. "She has sinned and punishment must be hers. The Lord must not be mocked. The Lord shall never find me afraid to follow His course. Do not write to her."

For a while he did not say anything. He had raised himself while he was talking and now he began to settle back, his head getting deeper and deeper into the pillow and his hands relaxing. His eyes closed. I thought he was asleep and then he swallowed like when the dentist is fixing your teeth. "The sinner must pay the price," he said. "The Lord shall not be mocked. Do not write her." Then he shut his hands again as tight as he could, the way he always did when he was determined, but he couldn't shut them very tight now, because his fingers curled up too much.

"But," he said, a good while afterward, "if she

BOONE STOP

found out that I was sick . . . some way or other . . . she might like to know."

Turning his head around on the pillow he looked at me against the light and winked his eye hard where the rheumatism was getting into it. "I guess you are getting pretty sleepy. I just thought I would tell you these things and maybe sometime you will understand. I had a pretty hard time of it when I was a boy. I can remember how my father used to stand at the end of the row in Ohio . . . with a strap in his hand. That was the way we were brought up . . . and it was hard for me to change. I just thought I would tell you that. One of the hard things in this world is for people to understand one another. I don't know but what maybe it's the hardest. I think if you will turn down the light a little maybe I can get some sleep. Good night, Cleveland."

It wasn't much like Pa telling anybody good night; he usually just let them go off to bed. Then he wiped his eyes, because the light was pretty strong, and put the handkerchief back under his pillow. "Maybe you will understand sometime."

There wasn't anything to understand, but I didn't tell him so. I guess he had been lonely, lying in bed that way, and wanted somebody to talk to. I know I always do when I have to stay in bed. The first morning it is all right, but after that it gets to be pretty hard work.

"Good night, Cleveland," he said, and held out his hand. It seemed strange, Pa wanting to shake hands with me because I wasn't going anywhere. I would be down to breakfast in the morning as usual.

BOONE STOP

"Good night," I said. "Hope you will sleep well."

"Maybe I will," he said, and turned his face over on the pillow away from me.

That was all he wanted to say. It was just about old times and the photographer who used to live in our town. It wasn't about anything I had done, nor about the pool-hall. So I went up-stairs and began to think about Cleo, but it wasn't very long till I was asleep. Pa had kept me up pretty late.

XVIII

A strange woman in the kitchen wears Ma's apron and there is a queer smell over everything. Pa's bed is carried out to the barn and the depot 'bus backs up in front of our house.

THE next morning I heard Gran'ma coming up the stairs, one foot at a time, taking hold of the railing with her hands.

But she did not go to Susie's room; instead she came straight to mine. Coming up, she put her hand on my forehead while I wiped out my eyes because I always hate for anybody to see me before I get my face washed.

"I've come to tell you something, Clevie," said Gran'ma, talking as if I was just a boy back in Rutherford.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Clevie, I have sad news for you. Your father is dead."

It didn't seem as if I was hearing her, but I was, because she was standing beside my bed with her hand on my forehead. It was the way she used to do when I would get hurt. She would put her hand on my forehead and then I would seem to be able to stand it better. "He died last night."

BOONE STOP

I felt a throb all over, and then something sink. I had never thought of Pa as dying. Other people died, but nobody I knew very well. It had never seemed to me that death was anything to worry about; it was for other people. Pa seemed to be the last one to think about. He could face anything. And now death had struck among us.

It didn't seem that Pa could be dead, because only last night I was talking to him. He had been telling me all about coming from Ohio in a covered wagon, with an extra horse behind, and now he was dead. It seemed more like waking up to find your foot asleep.

"You must bear up and be a good boy because it will be about all your mother can stand. Put on your Sunday clothes and come down."

Turning, Gran'ma closed the door, letting the knob go back softly, and then went down the steps one at a time. It was pretty hard for Gran'ma to get up and down, so that she had to brace her hands against the wall.

From the closet I took out my Sunday clothes and began putting them on. "Pa is down-stairs," I said to myself. "But he is dead. He can't speak or do anything, and only last night he was telling all about old times and about the photographer who thought Susie was so smart." I began to cry because when I am alone and think of sad things that way I can't keep from crying. I began to wish that I had been a better boy and that I hadn't sassed him back so much and that I had tried to be more of a help. I had never been much of a comfort to him. About all I had done was to get out of

BOONE STOP

work when I could and try to show him how much smarter I was.

I went down-stairs. Pa's room was all torn up, with the windows open and things piled on the backs of chairs and a queer smell over everything. They had taken him into the parlor, but they wouldn't let me in to see him. Once in a while they would open the door and inside I could see two men in shirt-sleeves moving around. Pa was in the room where we had gathered so many times for prayers and where he had spent so many hours reading the Bible, but it didn't seem like the same place. The house didn't seem to belong to us. People I had never seen were coming and going and acting as if the place belonged to them. In the yard men were standing and talking, but not laughing or whittling the way they would at a sale. In the kitchen a strange woman was hunting for pots and pans and wearing Ma's apron and using Gran'ma's chair to pile things on. All day people came and went, while I tried to find something to do. But there wasn't anything to do. I would wander from room to room and in every one of them would be somebody strange and nothing was where it belonged. The rocking-chairs were taken up-stairs and folding-chairs were brought from the Sunday-school room and set in rows.

It wasn't long till signs of Pa's things began to disappear. His bed was taken down and the posts and springs carried out to the barn. The cushions were taken out of his rocking-chair and his glasses put in the bureau drawer.

"We'd better get rid of these," said a woman,

BOONE STOP

and gathered up the old copies of *The Ram's Horn* that Pa kept in a neat pile on the lower shelf of the center-table. Nobody but Pa was ever allowed to touch them, and if you did you had to put them back in their place so that they wouldn't get mixed up; but now the woman carried them out to the barn and threw them down on the baled hay as if they were nothing at all.

It made me feel pretty lonesome. I would go along thinking about myself or about Cleo and then all of a sudden it would come over me that Pa was dead. I would feel choked up, and if I was by myself I would cry a little, but pretty soon I would forget all about it and be thinking about something else. I wished I had been better to Pa. I liked Pa, but I had always felt kind of uneasy in his presence. If I would start in to talk about Indian-fighting or how to make counterfeit money, he would begin to tell me about the higher things of life. Once in a while, when he would play with me or tell me about the Mormons in Nauvoo, I wouldn't want to leave him; he would be more like company. Then pretty soon he would draw down his face and begin to talk about being saved. I wasn't interested in being saved; I wanted to have a good time. If I couldn't have it with Pa I would go where I could.

Now that he was dead I began to feel sorry. "He was the best friend I had in the world," I said, and began to sniff, and then while the tears were still on my cheeks I began to think about Cleo.

There was a rattle of tires and a scraping of wheels. It was the depot 'bus backing up in front of our house. A strange man got out and came up

BOONE STOP

the walk toward our front door, setting his heels down hard and springing his knees as if he had been riding a long time. He wasn't very stylish-looking. He had some whiskers on his chin and a muffler around his throat, and an old black traveling-bag with the handle held fast on one side by a string.

"This is your Uncle Allen," said Ma. I shook hands with him, but I didn't think much of him. He looked a good deal like the picture in the album, except he didn't have whiskers on his throat. He wasn't rich. I could see that. I didn't seem to have any relatives who would be able to leave me anything.

After a while there was another sound of wheels scraping on the curb, and the 'bus backed up again. Usually the 'bus man didn't know where we lived, because none of our family could ever afford to ride in the 'bus, but now I guess he knew we were somebody.

"Whoa!" said the driver and pulled on the strap; the step let down and the door opened. A lady got out and came up the walk kind of slowly, as if she didn't know whether she wanted to come or not. It was Susie.

"She's here," said Gran'ma, and went pushing through the people to meet her without ever thinking of her cane. She met her on the porch and put her arms around her, but she couldn't put them as high on Susie as Susie could on her, because Gran'ma wasn't very tall. She was kind of short and fat, but she could make good fried mush. "Oh, child! child!" said Gran'ma, patting her on the shoulders

BOONE STOP

with her crooked wrist. That was all she could say. You would think that when Gran'ma knew that she was coming she would have something better studied up to say, but she hadn't. She just hugged her and patted her on the back and that was all.

Susie stopped and looked at me, without coming toward me. "Aren't you going to kiss me, Cleve?" she said. She didn't ask how I was feeling or anything. She just asked if I was going to kiss her. Walking up to her, I did. I wasn't much on kissing, but with Susie it was different. She would hardly let loose of me; she kept her arms around me and kept patting my face. When I got a chance I looked at her, but she wasn't very different. She seemed just about the same, except older. But Pa would never have thought so; he thought that when you made one misstep you could never be the same again. The rest of your days must then be given over to repentance and sorrow. But I didn't feel that way. Just because you got in trouble once I don't see why that should ruin your whole life. I didn't say so, but I wasn't much better than Susie. I kept it to myself, but about the only difference between Susie and me was that Susie had made a little worse mistake. I wasn't going to tell anything on myself, but that was the way it was—I wasn't much better. A good deal of the time, I think about the only difference between the good and the bad is that the bad have it found out on them.

Susie went around the house lifting up this thing and patting that and putting her hands on the wall. I guess she was pretty glad to get back. When she stopped in front of the enlarged crayon picture of Pa,

BOONE STOP

she stood a moment looking up at it and then tears began to come in her eyes.

I had never before known how many friends Pa had. The carriages reached from our corner to the water-tower. A good many of the men walked two abreast, with Shug Leffler himself at the head carrying a wreath of flowers. People might not always agree with Pa, but they had to respect him, because Pa was just what he was. There wasn't any pretense about him. When he said a thing you knew it was true, and when he said that he was going to lick you you could be sure that he was going to do it. When I saw the crowd and so many poor people on the sidewalk trying to keep up—because Pa was always helping the poor people and never saying anything about it—I made up my mind that I would try to be good so that I would have a big funeral, too. But I wasn't going to give away as much money as Pa did, because money was too hard to get. I would just be kind to the poor and give them advice and save my money to buy a rubber-tired buggy.

It was pretty solemn at the graveyard with Ma standing with her arm around me as if I was the only one in the world she had to lean on. I tried to keep from crying but I couldn't. I didn't mind crying when I was by myself, but I didn't want to cry with everybody standing around. But when the clods went down on the coffin I couldn't help it. Pa had done so much good in the world and worked so hard and now this was all that it amounted to. It made a person think.

When the preacher got through reading and the

BOONE STOP

people began to go away, I went back to our carriage and there standing by the side of it was Oscar with his Sunday suit on and his good hand behind him.

"I thought you might like this," said Oscar, and held out his hand, and in it was a bunch of wild flowers he had picked in the woods back of the poor-house. "I never had a pa, but I know I would feel pretty bad, so I thought I would just bring you these." With that Oscar put them in my hand and when we drove off he came stumbling along behind, pitching over his foot and getting out of the way when anybody came along in a rig. Nobody paid any attention to him or asked him to ride because he was just one of the loonies from the poor-farm.

That was the last time I ever saw Oscar, for pretty soon after that he died. He was never very strong and he had to work pretty hard on the poor-farm. His name wasn't in the paper or anything, because he wasn't anybody. Oscar didn't amount to much, but I would rather have been Oscar than Ozy Getchell. Ozy Getchell had a college education and silk socks and everything, but Oscar had done more good in the world than Ozy had. It isn't always the fashionable people who can hire livery rigs that the world is best off by having.

XIX

Gran'ma motions for Charley Colden to come around to the back door, and he goes away whistling. I buy a dress-suit and it looks pretty good on me. I go to Cleo's dance and something happens on the station platform.

IT was lonely around the house after Pa was gone; before I would think I would go into a room expecting him to be there and it would be pretty lonesome without him. Everywhere there was something to remind me of him. On the bureau in the sitting-room were the pill-boxes with the hours marked on the bottom and on the clockshelf were the medicine-bottles with the labels streaked where the medicine had run down. Day after day they set there and then one day Gran'ma carried them out to the barn, but Pa would never have done that because he always believed in saving everything. He would save the bottles with the medicine in them, but nobody would want to take it. Then some day he would want a bottle to put some linseed in, or some castor-oil, and would wash out the bottle with hot water and use it. The doors got so they wouldn't fit without banging and the wire holding up the stovepipe in the kitchen got loose, but there was

BOONE STOP

nobody to fix it. Pa always looked after such things and we sort of waited as if we expected him to fix them now.

One by one the things that belonged to Pa began to disappear, but Ma wanted to keep them. In the closet in the spare room, where she had hung them, were Pa's trousers hanging by the belt on the back. There was no one to wear them, but Ma would not give them away. A while she kept for them awhile, but hooks were pretty scarce, so something else was put on the hook with them and she let it stay. Then something else was put on, and pretty soon Pa's trousers were so covered that you couldn't find them without taking everything off.

One day Gran'ma came down-stairs with Pa's trousers over her arm. "I think we had better get rid of these," she said. "We are so crowded up there."

Ma got up hurriedly and took them in her hands. "I'll wrap them up and put them on a shelf or something."

"They will get moldy," said Gran'ma. "Don't you think we had just as well give them away?"

Ma looked at them and moved her lips and turned them over. "They are pretty good yet," she said. "He was always easy on his clothes."

"They would do somebody a lot of good," said Gran'ma.

"I'll find a place for them," said Ma, and put them on the line to air. When she brought them in she put them on the hook behind the kitchen door with the clothes-pin bag, but every time Gran'ma hung out the clothes she had to take them down.

BOONE STOP

Then they fell down behind the dirty-clothes barrel and Ma didn't know it for a long time. When she found them they were pretty dirty and wrinkled, with patches of white spider webs on them. She scraped the spider webs off and hung them out on the line again, but when she brought them back she didn't hang them on the clothes-bag hook again; she hung them on a nail on the stairs; but it was pretty hard for Gran'ma to go up or down because she had to take hold of the walls to help herself. Then one day I saw Gran'ma out in the back yard waving to somebody and when he came around the corner it was Charley Colden. Gran'ma handed him something and Charley took an end in each hand and stretched it tight to see if the middle would come up to his chin. It did and pretty soon Charley walked off down the street with Pa's Sunday pants over his arm, whistling and singing.

Ma never would have given them away, but Gran'ma did. She was not interested in keeping Pa's things around. She had never been the same toward Pa since he had made Susie leave home. But Ma was; she thought that whatever he did was right and once in a while she would wake up at night and say how lonely life was.

I tried to be sad, but there were a good many things to think about. Sometimes I would go all day and not think about Pa once, and then the next morning I would wake up and he would be the first thing I would think about. It would almost seem that he was there till I went down-stairs and his rocking-chair would be setting there stiff and straight without any cushions in it.

BOONE STOP

By the time breakfast was over I would be thinking of the dance that Cleo was going to give. I would turn the invitation over and over and look at it and think whether I would accept it or not. All the time I knew that I was going to, but I liked to look at it and feel sad and wonder if I should. I got a good deal of pleasure sometimes out of feeling sad.

"I won't go," I said to myself, "but I'll just stop at Hoehn's, the Quality Store, and see what they have in the way of dress-suits." The window was fixed up nice, with a dummy wearing a dress-suit, except you could see where the joints in his arms were. The vest it had on was all right, but it didn't have the flowers William Pliss's vests had. His had the biggest flowers I ever saw. The Hoehn one just had thin stripes, but it was all right.

Opening the door I walked in briskly. I do that sometimes when I want to show who I am. "What you got in the way of dress-suits?" I asked, and the way I asked it showed that if they were not just about right I wouldn't buy one.

"We have just got in a new stock," said Mr. Hoehn, coming around the counter and being polite. You could never go in to buy anything without a new stock having just got in. With that he took off my coat and by the way he dropped it on the counter I could tell that he didn't think much of it. He never thought much of anything that wasn't bought in his store.

It was a slick suit and when he pulled out the mirrors so that I could see myself in three different ways it looked pretty good. "I'll take it," I said,

BOONE STOP

and didn't ask him to throw in a pair of suspenders. I was getting so now that I didn't care about such things. With the suit under my arm I walked out the front door with his name on the paper showing so that everybody could see. I was getting up in the world. I didn't have to slip down to William Pliss's New and Second Hand Store any more. I bought my clothes from the best store in town and paid cash. I was getting ahead every day.

As I was coming down the street Red Milligan was sweeping out, holding the door open with his foot and sending the things out on the sidewalk. Red didn't sweep up very often, so that when he did there was a good deal to get out.

"Traveling or goin' somewhere?" said Red, setting down the broom and pulling up his pants. "'Ain't seen you in a long time. Come on in and have a smoke."

With that Red went in and slid back the panel and waited, but I took just an ordinary Owl cigar. I could have had the best in the case if I had wanted to.

"Hear the news?" asked Red.

"No."

"I'm goin' to leave. There ain't any chance for a fellow in this town. I'm going to Kansas City. That's the place. Something doing all the time. That's the kind of place it takes for me. If it ain't alive I won't stay in it. This place is dead. When I get into a town and find that it ain't any good, I get out. That's my policy. I won't stick around a place that hasn't got some life in it. You come down and I'll show you around. Bring some money

BOONE STOP

with you and we will see the sights. I guess there ain't much I can't show you. I won't say too much but I guess you won't be disappointed. Look what I have been saving for you."

With that Red reached in and brought out a pamphlet with the corners crumpled up from being in his pocket. "Come on over and set down," said Red, leading the way to the stove which had a good many initials and pictures scratched on it. "I don't show this to everybody, but this is what I mean." It was the same advertising book by "Old Dr. Grindle" that I had seen Ozy reading at prayer-meeting.

"I'd let you take this along," went on Red, "but it's the only one I got. A fellow your age ought to know a little about life—and Kansas City's the place to learn it. Just look at this one." With that Red wet his thumb and turned to a picture. "Do you get the idea?" asked Red, laughing till his bad teeth showed. Red was not very good-looking, and especially when he breathed in your face and showed his teeth. "I gave one of these to Ozy Getchell and he said it was the warmest thing he ever got hold of."

And then I thought of Ozy. He would sit on the front porch with Pa and talk religion till we were ready to go to prayer-meeting; then he would pull out his cuffs and walk to the church by the side of Susie, making her laugh by the funny things he would say, and all the time he would have that book in his pocket. After prayer-meeting was over he would take her for a long walk and the next morning Susie would have a headache and couldn't come

BOONE STOP

down to breakfast. That was the kind of person who carried this book.

Susie was not like she used to be. She used to be happy and singing all day, but now she didn't have much to say and didn't go out very often. She would sit around and look out the window a good deal and sometimes her eyes would be red.

"It's hot stuff," said Red, laughing and showing his teeth again. "And when I say that I know what I am talking about. If you want it I'll let you have it a night or two."

"All right, I'd like to have it," I said, but I wasn't going to do with it what he thought.

"I knew you was the right kind," said Red, winking up his eye. "I can always spot 'em. When you come to Kansas City we'll see a little life together. Page twenty-nine's a good one. Read that first and then the chapter, 'The Secret of Life.' Then let me know what you think of it."

"I know what I think of it already," I said, and with that I took hold of the wire handle of the stove door and opened it and threw the book in. It lay on the coals a second, the corners began to scorch, and then up it went.

With that I turned and walked out. I could hear Red slamming the door shut with the poker and swearing and calling me names and saying that was what he got for trying to show me a few things, but I didn't care. I had had all of him I wanted. He was not my kind. I wasn't going to have any more to do with people like him. I was more interested in people like Mr. Chambers, who could talk something besides medicine-books.

BOONE STOP

That was the last I ever saw of Red Milligan, but a good while afterward his name was in the Kansas City paper and a write-up telling how he had been working in one of the big pool-halls and how they had been missing money, and then one night they had caught him. Then the police took him off.

I looked pretty nice the night of Cleo's dance. I was getting to be pretty good-looking, especially a side view. I would sit that way when I was with the ladies. No wonder people were glad to have me come to their homes. I was getting up in the world. Here I was putting on a dress-suit and going to a dance in the home of R. G. Chambers, the great lawyer. I had come a long ways, and if I had come this far there was no reason why I shouldn't go farther. It wasn't very long ago that I used to drive a team to a hay-fork, and now I was putting on a dress-suit and going to a dance in a landau.

"Look who's here," said Mr. Chambers when I came up the steps. "It isn't the same vest, though." With that Mr. Chambers slapped me on the shoulders and laughed. Mr. Chambers was always laughing when he saw me—especially when I was dressed up. "By gicks! it's a pretty slick vest—but I kind of miss the flowers. Do you know, sometimes when I get discouraged I think of those flowers and then I always feel all right. It's wonderful what effect red flowers have on me."

Things were fixed up mighty nice, but it didn't take me long to find where the music was coming from. An orchestra behind some plants and flowers was making it.

BOONE STOP

Merle Sewell tried to get all the dances with her, but he didn't. He might have at one time but he couldn't now. His tie was not tied very well. It should have been a little tighter in the middle and a little broader at the ends. Merle used to pay attention to such things, but he was getting so that he wasn't as particular. He was spending too much time at No. 9, talking to George. He ought to have known, too, because he had got a job in Hoehn's, the Quality Store, where he could see all the fashion plates and read the magazines, but he didn't. All he thought about was getting through to have a talk with George.

A good-looking family the Chambers made, standing there receiving people, and Mr. Chambers feeling at home with everybody and having something pleasant to say to everybody, whether they were fashionably dressed or not. He seemed to like it, but Pa would never have. It would have been the last thing in the world Pa would have done—stand in a receiving-line with a pair of white gloves on. He would have said it was the work of the devil and run the musicians out of the house. It seemed strange, the difference between them, and yet both of them were good men. Neither one would have done anything wrong, and yet one thought having a dance was all right and the other thought it was the work of the devil.

People are queer. It was a good deal as Pa said—about the hardest thing is for them to understand one another.

When the music started I took hold of Cleo's hand and put my other one behind her and stepped

BOONE STOP

off. It was wonderful. But as soon as the music stopped I would take my hand away because it didn't seem right to have my arm around her. It would make me tremble when I would think where I had it. I had changed a good deal since the time I had tried to kiss her on the hayrack-ride. It made me feel ashamed of myself now to think how I acted. I certainly didn't know much in those days. Standing there in her shimmery dress and her hair done up fashionably she looked wonderful. It made me feel rough and awkward. It was strange what she should see in me. I would never dare kiss her.

But I did. It was not till later, though, and then not the way I thought.

She seemed a long ways off when I looked at her, because there was a ringing in my ears and a swimming in my eyes. She seemed a long ways off, and yet my arm was around her. It didn't seem possible that Cleo was right there beside me. There wasn't anybody in Boone Stop who was a better musician than she was. She could play anything on a piano, and you take a good piano, and there isn't any better music. Take a piano that is in tune and a girl to play it, and there isn't anything nicer. That is what I have always said.

"There's nothing I'd rather do than dance," I said, and then I was going to whisper "with you," but she didn't give me a chance.

"Wouldn't you rather eat parfay ice-cream?" she asked. "I understand it is very good—in Chicago and cities where they have it." That was the way with girls; they never forgot anything.

"Parfay ice-cream makes me sick," I said. "Plain

BOONE STOP

ordinary chocolate ice-cream is good enough for me. I've got over all that."

She acted as if she thought I meant just ice-cream. But I didn't; I wanted her to understand that I meant girls, too.

"It would be pretty nice," said Cleo, "to watch a parade go by and then go into a nice ice-cream parlor and have some parlay ice-cream with an actress. It would be nice—especially in some large city like Chicago, where there are plenty of people."

"It would not," I said. "It makes me sick to think of it." But I had to say pretty often that it made me sick to get Cleo's mind off it, but after a while I did and we were happy.

It was a wonderful evening and no difference how many times I danced with her I would want to dance once more.

"Don't you want to stay a minute after they have gone and help straighten things around?" said Cleo, when the people were getting ready to go. But we didn't do much straightening. We started in to straighten but pretty soon she went over to the piano and then we forgot all about it. Cleo was a good player, but mostly she played the things she had played the night of the strawberry festival. When she first started in to play I was sitting in a chair quite a ways from the piano, but pretty soon I moved it up closer, and then pretty soon I moved it still closer, and then I stood up to turn the music. Then pretty soon I saw that I could turn it just as well sitting beside her, so I did. I pretended to be thinking only of the music, but I wasn't; I was

BOONE STOP

thinking about her and how I had never noticed before how red her lips were. It kind of made my head swim, but I didn't kiss her. I would rather have died than kiss her.

But when it did happen it happened before I knew it. It was not till that fall, when I was starting to the University to study mining. And then it was not when we were all alone or sitting on the sofa or anything. It was on the station platform and a lot of people were around. When the train came in, blowing off steam and ringing bells and making the ground shake, I began to feel choky. I tried to keep on laughing and joking and acting as if I wasn't going any farther than Bedison, but I didn't feel that way. The conductor called all aboard and waved his lantern, and then it happened. We just both took a step toward each other and held out our arms and it was over, but I didn't know what was happening till we were past Rosendale. I felt kind of numb for a while, and then I began to feel pretty good.

It was strange how I had felt that I would be doing something wrong if I kissed her, and then all of a sudden to up and do it and not have her hit me or anything. It wasn't like the hayrack-ride. Girls were queer; I didn't understand them, but I didn't care. They were all right when you found the right one.

When I came back Christmas, Gran'ma was down to meet me. Gran'ma had on her black dress and gold breastpin, as if I was company. Gran'ma was getting old and didn't dress up very often, but to-day she had on the best she had and kept patting me

BOONE STOP

on the back with her crooked wrist, as if I had been away for years.

"I've got somebody out in the carriage," she said, and I thought I would have to make the best of it. But it wasn't Mid. Mid had got a job in the probate clerk's office and couldn't get away. It was Cleo. Then Gran'ma turned her back, but it wouldn't have made any difference to me. She could have looked all she wanted to—I wouldn't have cared.

Gran'ma seemed awfully glad to see me while we were driving along, but she didn't do much talking. She just sat there, once in a while reaching out and patting my hand. That was the way with Gran'ma; when she was the happiest she would do the least talking. But it was the other way with me—I couldn't talk fast enough.

THE END

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